

THE EYNESHAM RECORD
Number 9 – 1992

NOTES

1. Images have been optimised throughout for online viewing.
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3. Errors of fact or interpretation in the original which have since come to light are repeated but followed by an amendment in curly brackets { thus }
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Note on abbreviations

Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
Chambers, 1936	Chambers, E.K. <i>Eynsham under the Monks</i> . Oxfordshire Record Society, vol.18, 1936.
E.H.G.	Eynsham History Group.
<i>E.R.</i>	<i>Eynsham Record</i> .
<i>Eynsham Cart.</i>	<i>Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham</i> . Salter, H.E. (Ed.), (1 and 2) in 2 volumes, Oxford Historical Society, vol.49 (1907) & vol.51 (1908).
Gordon, 1990	Gordon, Eric. <i>Eynsham Abbey: 1005-1228</i> , Phillimore, 1990.
O.S.	Ordnance Survey.
Oxon. Archives	Oxfordshire Archives, (formerly Oxfordshire Record Office)
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
<i>V.C.H. Oxon.</i>	<i>The Victoria History of the County of Oxford</i> .

FRONT COVER:

Oblique aerial photograph of part of Eynsham, looking east, in 1964.

Acre End St. to the left; the Chilbrook and railway line to the right.

Just beyond Station Rd. (in the foreground), the main run of the Abbey's medieval fishponds, as discussed by James Bond on pp.3-17, are clearly visible.

(Part of photograph AIP 77, Cambridge University Collection)



The
Eynsham
Record

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EDITORIAL

Regular readers will be pleased to see in these pages that Bishop Eric Gordon has resumed his series of articles dealing with the Abbey Charters. He is, most generously, donating the royalties from the sales of his book to the E.H.G.'s publications fund. I've included some selected extracts of reviews of *Eynsham Abbey, 1005-1228* on p.50.

The longest article, by James Bond on the Abbey's fishponds, is a professional piece of work of the scope and quality associated with, say, *Oxoniensia*. I am delighted to have 'scooped' it for our more humble journal.

Thanks also, of course, to all other contributors, large and small - Joseph Luna is 7 years old!

The indexing of the Eynsham census returns, 1841-81, has almost been completed, and Edna Mason will have something to write about this next year.

On October 19th, 1991, the E.H.G. acted as hosts for the autumn meeting of the Oxfordshire Local History Association (O.L.H.A.). The topic for the day was 'Eynsham Abbey', with talks in the morning, followed by lunch and then visits to the archaeological site and a small exhibition, and conducted tours of the village. Members of O.L.H.A. judged the day to have been a great success; but it was made possible only through the efforts of many members of the E.H.G.

Mr William Joseph Beauchamp (1905-1991)

Mr Beauchamp was a member of a long-established family of Eynsham shopkeepers, builders and undertakers, in whose footsteps he followed. Older villagers will remember the Beauchamp shop in Acre End St. William Bainbridge, whose grandfather lived next door, certainly does. In his article on 'Gran'papa's House' (E.R., no.3, pp.30-40), where he stayed on many occasions as a boy, he recalled "a happy two-way traffic between myself and Willy and Amy Beauchamp next door". After attending Miss Swann's school in Mill St., Willy Beauchamp commuted by local train to school in Oxford. He retained an abiding interest in the old railways, and had the foresight to rescue sundry memorabilia from Eynsham's railway station when it closed. We extend our sympathy to Mrs Beauchamp, with whom he was a regular participant at our meetings for many years.

EYNESHAM ABBEY & THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS

The archaeologists completed their field work behind St Peter's Church at the end of February, and the site has been back-filled and re-turfed.

Graham Keevill, in charge of the project in succession to Charlie Chambers, had hoped to provide an article for this number of the Record, but the interval between the completion of the dig and our deadline for going to the printers proved too short. Instead he has offered to write an article for 1993. Waiting for a year will have advantages: further laboratory work on the finds will have been carried out; and Graham will have had more time for reflection, and analysis and interpretation of more than two years of hard work.

In March the Unit turned its attention to a small part of the fishponds area, namely the site interpreted from documentary sources as a moated property purchased by the Abbey in the early 13th century from Hervius, son of Peter.

A trench across the the north end of the site confirmed the former presence of the moat; Hervius's house was not found, but probably lay a little to the south. Many fragments of Roman pottery were discovered, perhaps surprisingly in view of the relative paucity of Roman remains previously found in the Eynsham area.

The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments is providing funds for a detailed topographical survey of the fishponds area, and a geophysical survey of other areas such as the Nursery field remains a possibility. (Editor)

BENEATH THE SURFACE

by Peter Way

*First an aerial photo. This might be the site.
Then a JCB clanking, heaps topsoil and stone.
Spadework and sieving bring artefacts up to the light.
Like lucky phrases, pottery shards and carved bone.
From the cesspit's recesses a plentiful yield.
Pieced from fragments the past begins to be known.
From the steel scaffold a view of what was concealed.
The camera's dispassionate eye probes and then prints.
Foundations laid and forgotten now stand revealed.
Tokens and keys emerge to give whispers and hints.
Buried conduits convey lost images once more bright.
Poems are excavations, their sources hidden long since.*

THE FISHPONDS OF EYNESHAM ABBEY

by James Bond

Introduction

This article is based upon an unpublished site appraisal of the Eynsham Abbey fishponds carried out in May 1979 while the author was on the staff of the Field Section of Oxfordshire Museum Services¹. The original report was intended only for limited circulation, and one of its purposes was to draw together from available sources what was then known about the abbey fishponds, set against the broader background of fish farming and fishpond management in the Middle Ages. Much of the basic information on the site was already available in undigested form within the County Sites and Monuments Record², including previously published historical documentation, vertical and oblique aerial photographs, sketch plans and reports of field inspections. The 1979 appraisal also assessed the state of preservation of the ponds, their archaeological potential, the measures for protection then available, and possible future management strategies.

So far as I am aware no detailed archaeological or documentary investigations of the abbey fishponds have taken place since that date. However, in the meantime, our general understanding of the role of fish in the medieval diet, and of the construction and management of medieval fishponds, has been enhanced considerably by several more recent publications, some of which have resulted in a significant modification of the views which prevailed in 1979³. Moreover, the importance of the abbey site itself has been underlined by the publication of Bishop Gordon's book on the abbey and Alan Crossley's account of the town and parish in the most recent volume of the Victoria County History⁴ and by a new campaign of excavations undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit⁵. This therefore seems an opportune moment to exhume and reassess the factual and interpretative parts of the original appraisal and to offer them for wider circulation in the light of our present understanding.

Archaeological Observations

It is now recognised that the fishponds of Eynsham Abbey were of considerable extent and complexity, occupying at least 1.5 hectares along the Chil Brook valley, to the south and south-west of the main claustral buildings. Their principal component was a chain of five, or possibly six large rectangular ponds extending for some 260m from the modern Station Road downstream to a point due south of the parish church of St Leonard. In addition there was a more compact group of four or five smaller ponds, perhaps breeding tanks, some 130-210m further downstream on the north side of the valley, immediately south of the former nursery garden.

Although the earthworks of the dams and leats of the abandoned ponds survived in reasonably good condition into the early 1960s, regrettably they remained unsurveyed. Since that date they have become obscured by partial infilling and levelling, and today the greater part of the complex can hardly be recognised on the ground. A provisional reconstruction of their original form has emerged only slowly and with some difficulty, through the successive efforts of several different investigators.

The first observation on the ponds to be published in modern times was a passing reference made by Chambers in 1936⁶. He says nothing about their general layout, but does make an interesting comment on the supply of water to the site, to the effect that the abbey fishponds were fed by a stream rising in a spring called the Holewelle just south of the present Abbey Farm barn; and that this stream probably once ran straight into the Chil Brook, but seems to have been blocked at that end and turned east to feed the abbey fishponds. The Holewelle spring is mentioned in one of the deeds by which land was transferred to the abbey in the thirteenth century, discussed further below. In fact the Chil Brook itself must always have been the main source of water for the ponds; the stream described here by Chambers appears to be led below the dam of the third pond from the west into the southern side leat for the lower ponds of the main flight. It also bypasses the smaller group of ponds lower down, which were probably fed directly by springs.

The earliest aerial photograph of the site known so far was taken in July 1929, but no comments on this seem to have been recorded until November 1968, when routine scanning of the collections at Southampton by staff of the former Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey resulted in the identification of 'a possible moat and fishponds' on the southern side of the abbey precinct. The ponds were also clearly shown on an oblique aerial photograph in the Cambridge University collection taken on 10th April 1964⁷.

The first substantial entry in the Oxfordshire Sites & Monuments Record is a report of a field inspection and sketch survey made by Michael Aston in 1971. He made a number of pertinent observations, in particular:-

1. The pattern of channels and leats and the general configuration of the contours indicate clearly that the Chil Brook had been diverted into a new channel on the southern flank of the valley in order to make room for the construction of fishponds in the old valley bottom. The stream still follows this diverted course today.

2. Without benefit of access to the earlier aerial photographs, Aston was unable to make much sense of the main flight of ponds on the ground, and it is clear that they had suffered considerable damage within the previous ten years. The intervening dams had been levelled, and although Aston noted low-lying marshy areas with

vestigial banks and drainage channels cut through them in one or two places immediately to the north of the valley bottom, where the old course of the Chil Brook could still be traced, he seems to have envisaged this area as consisting of simply one large pond. However, he noted the main dam surviving at the bottom of the flight, and also immediately to the north the foundations of a wall aligned in a roughly north-south orientation.

3. To the south of the main flight, between the old and new courses of the Chil Brook, Aston's sketch plan showed a rectangular enclosure surrounded by a bank and ditch. This can be equated with the 'moat' noted in the Ordnance Survey archaeological records. Aston's field notes do not include any particular comment on this feature, and he was evidently unaware of the documentary evidence for the location of a medieval house site in this vicinity, to be discussed further below.

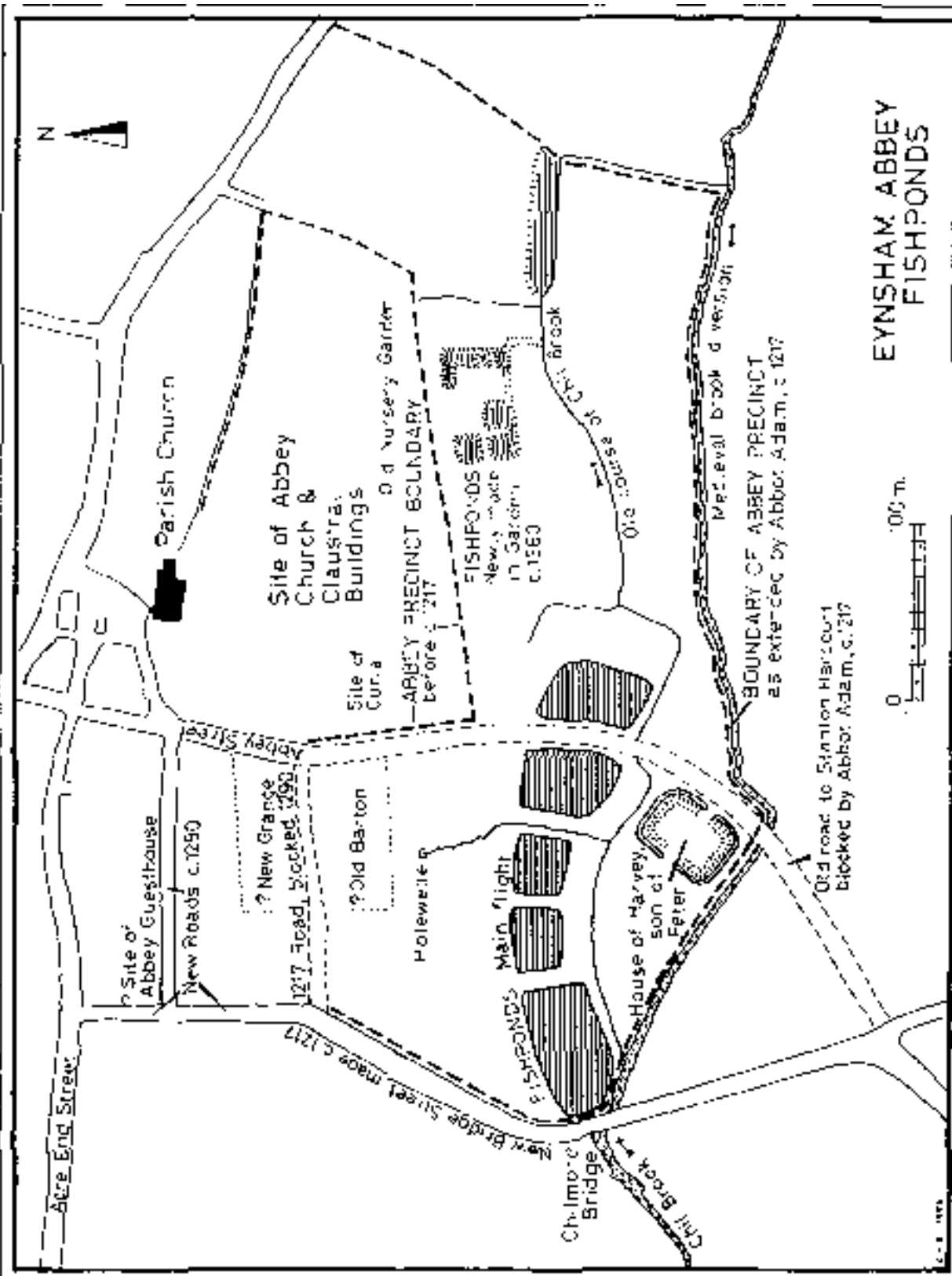
4. Below the main flight Aston identified the group of smaller ponds south of the old nursery garden. He recorded the remains of at least five small, shallow, rectangular ponds, describing the uppermost pair as arranged in an east-west alignment one above the other, with the remaining three arranged in a north-south row at right-angles to the former stream course.

5. He also noted that all vestiges of a long marshy strip to the south of the playing-field shown on earlier editions of the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, which could have been the remains of yet another pond, had by 1971 entirely disappeared.

6. Aston's sketch plan shows minor earthwork features extending as far downstream as the railway bridges, but apart from the outflow leat below the ponds these appear to be related mainly to later drainage operations.

7. Regarding the general condition of the complex in 1971, Aston describes the ponds as a whole as overgrown, the five small ponds as 'rather ruined', and 'one fishpond destroyed'.

In 1975 a complete set of vertical aerial photographs from 4,000 feet, commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council from Fairey Aviation Surveys and flown in 1961, was deposited with the Sites and Monuments Record⁸. These photographs produced important new evidence, showing the state of the main flight of fishponds prior to the damage which had confused their surface configurations. Several of the features noted by Aston show up clearly on the 1961 photographs, including the old and new courses of the Chil Brook; but the five smaller ponds south of the nursery garden are not very clear, and could barely have been detected from the photographs alone. The main flight of ponds, on the other hand, is very clear, with five or six dry rectangular depressions with intervening dams strung out in a row along the north side of the original course of the Chil Brook, extending upstream as far as the Station



Road bridge. The rectangular enclosure to the south can be seen to have causeway entrances across its surrounding ditch on both east and west sides. The general configuration of these newly-detected earthworks was sketch-plotted from the aerial photographs by the present writer in 1976.

In 1977 the site was re-examined on the ground by John Steane⁹. By that date the documentary evidence for the extension of the monastic precinct early in the thirteenth century had been recognised (discussed further below), and the information from the 1961 aerial photographs was readily available. Steane's sketch map shows six ponds in the main chain, with a substantial dam at the lower end, and the rectangular ditched enclosure to the south between the old and new courses of the brook. In one respect his plan is incorrect, showing the line of the old Stanton Harcourt road across the valley (again, see further below) passing below the third pond from the top, west of the rectangular enclosure, whereas in fact it crossed below the fourth pond, east of the enclosure. Steane's field report comments on the features already noted, and adds further information on the condition of the site. The two easternmost ponds of the main flight had been filled by dumping. It has not been established whether this operation was preceded by levelling, but it is possible that some remnants of the original earthworks may have been sealed intact beneath the dumped material. Sizeable remains of the fishpond earthworks were still visible immediately east of the Chilmore Bridge.

No scientific excavation has yet taken place on the fishponds themselves, but the magnetometer survey and one of the trial trenches cut in the Nursery Field by Margaret Gray and Nicholas Clayton in 1971 located a very large ditch which was provisionally interpreted as the southern perimeter of the abbey precinct¹⁰. If, as seems likely, this interpretation is correct, it very probably represents the early precinct boundary prior to the enlargement of the early thirteenth century which brought the land containing the fishponds within the bounds. The evidence for this precinct extension is discussed in the following section.

Documentary Evidence

Little is known about the condition and appearance of the Chil Brook valley at Eynsham before the early Middle Ages, though the original course of the brook can be traced on aerial photographs. The monastic precinct of the eleventh and twelfth centuries appears to have been relatively small, bounded on the south by the large ditch identified in the 1971 excavation and on the west by the old road from Eynsham to Stanton Harcourt. The present Abbey Street, now a cul-de-sac, represents the northernmost end of this road. It is quite clear from both archaeological and documentary evidence that it originally continued across the valley, curving round

to link up with the bend in the present Stanton Harcourt road immediately south-east of the point later occupied by the railway station.

Documentary records of a series of significant changes in the early thirteenth century provide the earliest likely context for the construction of the main flight of ponds. During the time of Abbot Adam (1213-28) a major extension to the abbey precinct was carried out. This was one of a number of ambitious and expensive schemes undertaken by this abbot, which brought the community into debt and led eventually to his deposition. Abbot Adam embarked upon a policy of purchasing land to the west of the old Stanton Harcourt road. A house, courtyard and croft which stood beyond the brook towards Stanton was acquired from *Herveius filius Petri*, in exchange for another house and croft previously held by Henry Banastre¹¹. Some years ago Hugh Cooper pointed out that the position of the small embanked and moated enclosure identified in Aston's survey, which is clearly aligned upon the course of the old road south of the original course of the Chil Brook, fits perfectly the position of the house of Harvey, son of Peter, as described in the Cartulary. In mid-December 1991, when the final draft of this paper was in preparation, trial trenches were cut across this earthwork by the Oxford Archaeological Unit as part of the archaeological evaluation of the proposed route of a new main sewer. The evidence from this exercise was wholly compatible with Cooper's interpretation. Pottery from the site suggested that the moat was constructed over an area of Roman and late Saxon settlement in the mid- or late eleventh century, and was occupied into the early thirteenth century. The moat was then apparently allowed to silt up, and the absence of later material suggested that the site of Harvey's house was entirely abandoned after its acquisition by the abbey¹².

Another messuage, garden and croft next to the abbot's barton, with a plot extending in length from the new bridge to the angle of the barton wall on the north, and in width from the new street to the barton, was acquired from Ralph, son of Walter Clarkson (*Radulphus filius Walterii filii clerici*)¹³. A third property, consisting of arable land in Heycroft eight perches in the south and nine perches in the north by six perches in breadth, was granted to the abbey by Robert Halthein. The side of this plot was said to be separated from the new street by the spring called 'Holewelle', while its end abutted upon the *hospitale*¹⁴. The location of several of the landmarks described in these documents has been identified by Chambers and more recently by Crossley: the *barton* (a term which means 'farmyard' or 'steading') evidently stood to the south of the present Abbey Farm, while the *hospitale* may have been the abbey guesthouse or almonry rather than a separate hospital or almshouse, south of Acre End and west of Abbey Farm somewhere near the Swan Inn and Railway Inn¹⁵.

The line of the 'new street' had clearly come into existence by the time that the transactions described above were entered in the Cartulary, and further information on its creation is preserved in the Patent Rolls.

In 1217 Abbot Adam acquired licence to block off the original course of the Stanton Harcourt road which is described as passing east of the house of Harvey (*Herveius de Heinesham*), inconveniently separating the *curia* (the great court to the west of the church and claustral buildings forming the link between the abbey and the outside world) from the barton. In consequence he had to replace the original road and crossing by a new road and bridge outside the limits of the extended precinct, which now enclosed the barton and the former properties of Harvey and Walter Clarkson. The new road was to diverge from the old outside the door of Reginald Painter (*Reginald Pictor*), passing between the abbey barton and the tenement of John the Porter (*Johannes Janitor*) to the gate of the cemetery of the 'great church'¹⁶. The effect of this action can clearly be seen today. Abbey Street was stopped up and diverted, first to the west, probably along the line of the drive through the middle of Abbey Farm, then to the south, almost certainly along the line of the present Station Road over Chilmore Bridge: before the coming of the railway this was, significantly, known as New Bridge Street. Although Chilmore bridge itself has been enlarged and rebuilt in modern times, masonry which appears to be medieval still survives in the underside of its arch¹⁷. There were no houses along this new road as late as 1650.

Towards the last decade of the thirteenth century another street was closed off, with the abbot again undertaking to provide a new alternative route outside the precinct. The street blocked on this occasion formerly linked the abbey with the almonry, and if, *as seems* likely, the latter is identical with the *hospitale* mentioned in c.1217, then it is likely that the road closed was the east-west drive through Abbey Farm and its replacement the north end of the the present Station Road and/or Swan Street¹⁸.

The blocking and diversion of the Stanton Harcourt road, together with the acquisition of the lands described above, had permitted the abbot to add a western extension of considerable size to the abbey precinct. The only motive for this operation stated at the time was to allow the abbot to build a new grange or home farm adjoining the old barton on part of the ground gained thereby. Initially the land acquired from Robert Halthein was intended to be used for the new grange, but in fact it was built on a plot previously acquired from Walter Clarkson, as is made clear in the deed of his son Ralph¹⁹. The purpose of the second road diversion may have been to include the whole of the new home grange buildings as well as the old barton within the precinct. However, the new grange can have occupied only a very small

proportion of the 1217 precinct extension, and the opportunity to acquire more valley-bottom land for fishpond construction may have ranked as a secondary motive, though not stated in the contemporary sources.

Only one contemporary medieval reference to fishponds at Eynsham Abbey is known. This occurs in a survey of the abbey demesne dating from c.1360, which includes a description of a large garden '*cum vivariis pro pisc.[ibus] recent.[er] inponend.[is]*' (with fish-ponds recently made), planted with trees and plots of beans, cabbages, leeks, hemp and flax, bringing in 40s a year, and a large *curia* (court) on the western side of the abbey with a barn, sheds for oxen, cattle and sheep, and storehouses, bringing in 40s more²⁰.

There are often considerable difficulties in correlating documentary and field evidence and in establishing beyond all reasonable doubt that features visible on the ground today are identical with those specified in the documents. In this particular case, there seems little reason to question that the fourteenth-century document mentioned above does relate to at least part of the known fishpond complex; but its implications for the dating of the ponds as a whole are less clear-cut.

To sum up, at least three possible conclusions on the dating of the ponds can be drawn from the documentary evidence as currently known:

(1) The main flight of ponds can hardly have been constructed in its final form before 1217, as the western part of the system continues into the extension added to the earlier precinct in that year by Abbot Adam. They are not mentioned in the charter recording the acquisition by the same abbot of the house of Harvey, son of Peter, and the implication is clearly that the fishponds did not yet exist and that the diversion of the brook had not yet been carried out. However, assuming that our reconstruction is correct, the precinct extension seems far too large to have been made only for the purpose of accommodating the new home grange buildings. One possibility is that the entire group of ponds was built soon after 1217 and that the extra land was intended for this purpose from the outset; but it is difficult to reconcile this with the record of c.1360 unless a very elastic interpretation of their description as 'recently made' is taken.

(2) A second possibility is that the entire system of ponds was not laid out until a considerable time after the diversion of the old road and the extension of the precinct, and that the whole flight was built not long before 1360 when some ponds were said to be newly-made. There are two arguments against this. Firstly, it begs the question why Abbot Adam took the trouble to extend the precinct by such a large additional area in 1217: the land was not all needed for his new farm buildings, and although the unmodified valley bottom might have provided valuable meadow-land

this was not in particularly short supply in the vicinity of Eynsham, and it hardly seems necessary to go to the expense of including it within the new precinct wall. Secondly, the middle of the fourteenth century was in general one of economic decline, when labour costs were high in the wake of the Black Death, and the opportunities and incentives for a scheme involving considerable capital investment were not particularly great.

(3) The third, and perhaps most likely possibility, is that not all of the ponds were of the same date. There are several well-authenticated instances elsewhere where monastic fishponds were altered in form, extended, or in some cases contracted during the Middle Ages²¹. The main flight of ponds at Eynsham, which clearly represented the greatest capital expenditure, fit so neatly into the precinct extension scheme that it seems likely that their construction was intended from the outset and was achieved in or very soon after 1217. The 'recently-made' ponds of c.1360, which are stated specifically to lay within the abbey garden, might be equated with the five small ponds below the main flight first recorded by Aston in 1971; the juxtaposition in the survey description, whereby the garden and new ponds are followed by the western *curia*, could almost be taken to imply that they lay towards the eastern side of the precinct.

Finally, one early post-medieval description of the Eynsham Abbey fishponds is of some interest. Thomas Hearne visited the abbey in 1706, and relates as follows:

'I am told by some of y^e seniors at Einsham y^t the Monastery there had 52 Fish-Ponds belonging to it, according to y^e Number of Weeks in a year, which seems to be true from divers Holes near to y^e Place where the Monastery stood, w^{ch} without doubt were once Fish Ponds²².

While there is certainly evidence for quite a few separate ponds at Eynsham, the total is nowhere near 52, and this would indeed be unparalleled on any other monastic or secular site in England. It is difficult to escape the suspicion that Hearne was having his leg gently pulled by 'some of ye seniors'!

Monastic fisheries and fishponds: a general background

Fish played a vital part in the medieval diet, partly because meat was expensive and partly because of religious prohibitions on meat-eating. The Rule of St Benedict observed at Eynsham Abbey insisted upon abstention from the flesh of all four-footed beasts except in cases of sickness²³, and although some relaxation is evident in many monastic houses by the thirteenth century, economic necessity dictated what strict religious observance had failed to enforce, and the custom of eating fish on fast days in particular (Fridays and Lent) tended to be maintained. Even in the later

fifteenth century there were still around 175 fish-days in the year. A regular source of fish was, therefore an essential pre-requisite of monastic life.

One of the most important personalities associated with Eynsham Abbey is Aelfric, who was appointed to be its first abbot in 1005. In his previous monastery at Cerne (Dorset) he had been given special responsibility for teaching, and amongst his written works was the *Colloquy*, an educational text designed to teach the oblates Latin for everyday use, by means of a series of contrived dialogues with men of different occupations. Bearing in mind the purpose of the *Colloquy*, it is likely that it reflects familiar contemporary scenes, and the 'interview' with the fisherman probably gives a reasonably faithful portrayal of late Saxon fishing practices. In Aelfric's text the fisherman describes how he lays down nets in the stream from his boat and sets baited hooks and basket traps. He catches eels, pikes, *mynas* or *menas* ('minnows', probably any small fish), burbot, trout and lampreys from the stream. Sometimes he goes to sea to catch herrings, salmon, dolphins, sturgeon, oysters, crabs, mussels, winkles, cockles, plaice, flounders and lobsters; but he prefers not to join the whalers, for while this was profitable it was too dangerous. He sells his fish in the city, and would be able to sell more fish if his catch was greater²⁴.

It is significant that Aelfric, while describing fish caught by nets, hooks and traps from rivers and from the sea, makes no mention of fishponds: very probably at the time he was writing artificial ponds had not yet become a regular feature of monastic precincts in England, and rivers remained the principal source of fresh-water fish. Certainly from the evidence of charters, fish-weirs with basket traps were common features of the landscape by the tenth century²⁵. The Domesday survey records an annual yield of 450 eels from Eynsham Abbey's mill, and there are references to river-fisheries belonging to the Abbey in both the Thames and the Evenlode in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries²⁶. However, it is also evident that, even in the midlands, freshwater fish contributed far less to the diet than did marine species such as herring and cod. Other local monastic records, such as the accounts of Bicester Priory and Abingdon Abbey, make it very clear that dried, smoked, salted, pickled and even fresh marine fish were readily available, even this far inland, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries²⁷. By comparison freshwater fish were expensive luxury items²⁸, and in the monastery would tend to be reserved for feast days and for special occasions such as the entertainment of important guests.

While river fisheries remained important throughout the Middle Ages, they were not wholly reliable as a source of supply, and were sometimes located at an inconvenient distance from the abbey. The solution to the problem of ensuring that fish were available on the spot when needed was to construct artificial ponds in which live fish could be stored and bred. The techniques of making fishponds can be traced

back to the Roman world at least, but in England fishpond construction acquired its strongest momentum during the twelfth, thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

Fishponds are frequently encountered on monastic sites but are by no means restricted to them, being found also on many secular estates in association with castles, manor-houses, moated homesteads and parks. In the modern county of Oxfordshire alone the first attempt to draw together the evidence in 1985 resulted in the recognition of at least 148 examples of single fishponds or fishpond groups, about half of which probably date from the Middle Ages²⁹, and several further examples have been discovered since then³⁰. Of these, no more than ten or a dozen are unambiguously of monastic origin. This point needs emphasis, because the particular religious connotations of fish-eating and the widespread occurrence of ponds on monastic sites have misled many investigators (including the present writer) in the past into crediting the monastic orders with a more significant role in the introduction and development of fishponds than in reality they possessed. More recently Christopher Currie has argued persuasively that the introduction of fishponds in England was a secular aristocratic initiative and that, although ponds were undoubtedly an important component of many monastic sites, the monasteries were considerably less innovative in this field than had previously been assumed³¹.

Monastic ponds are enormously varied in character, ranging from small single store-ponds to complex series covering many hectares, the construction of which involved impressive feats of earth-moving and water-engineering. It has been observed that the most complicated and extensive systems of ponds tend to be associated with the reformed monastic orders and houses of canons which made their first appearance in the twelfth century, while the older Benedictine houses rarely seem to have more than two or three small, simple ponds. Several possible reasons for this distinction have been suggested. Many of the older Benedictine houses were situated in towns, where they had less room to lay out extensive ponds (or perhaps where there was more risk of their subsequent obliteration). Many of the older houses were also located close to major rivers where there was more opportunity to draw supplies from fish-weirs³². By contrast, houses of the reformed orders were often in rural upland locations, further away from the principal rivers but with ample space in which to develop pond systems. Whatever the general explanation, the arrangement of ponds at Eynsham finds no parallel amongst the other Benedictine houses in the south midlands, and it is difficult to see any obvious reason why it should be so atypical.

One final misconception propagated in earlier works (again by the present writer amongst others) ought now to be discarded: the suggestion that the more elaborate forms of ponds, such as those at Eynsham, were built not just to supply local

subsistence needs, but were conceived as large-scale commercial ventures. At one time this view seemed to be supported by the occasional references to the feeding of fish (for example, at Abingdon Abbey in 1322-3) and to sales of surplus freshwater fish (from the same abbey in 1388-9 and 1412-13)³³; but it is now realised that such records are exceptional, and that they pale into insignificance compared with records of purchases. Christopher Dyer has recently quoted the high prices paid for freshwater fish - 1s-3s for a mature pike or 5d-6d for a bream or tench in the fifteenth century, compared with a farthing for a herring or a halfpenny for a plaice or flounder - which indicates the intensity of labour necessary for fish-farming³⁴.

Christopher Currie has emphasized the other side of the same coin, the low yield of most medieval ponds - without supplementary feeding a pond one hectare in extent could hold about 227 kilos of bream, but since these take about five years to reach edible size, it would be capable of producing only about 45 kilos per annum. Assuming 175 fish days per year at which each monk would receive a minimum of 170 grams (227 grams unprepared weight) per day, Currie calculates that, in order to be self-sufficient in fish, a small house of ten brethren would need to produce 385 kilos of fish a year and would therefore require 8.5 hectares of ponds, while a large house of 40 brethren would require 36.5 hectares³⁵. The number of monks at Eynsham is not recorded before 1380, when there was a proposal to enlarge the community to 30 brethren as soon as suitable applicants could be found; in the early fifteenth century it may have been close to achieving this total, though by the Dissolution the number of monks had dwindled to ten³⁶. The needs of monastic servants, corrodians and guests must also be taken into account. It is very evident that production from ponds not much more than 1.5 hectares in extent would have been quite incapable of satisfying the regular domestic demand of the community even at its smallest recorded size, let alone producing a regular marketable surplus. In such circumstances the extent to which monastic communities depended upon supplies of sea fish is readily explicable. The earlier hypothesis that the more elaborate ponds were established through commercial motives is, therefore, no longer tenable.

Conclusion

The scope of this contribution has been modest: it was intended to do no more than consolidate what is known and what can be inferred from the evidence currently available, and to update the general background information provided in the 1979 appraisal. It will certainly not be the last word on the subject. Further documentation awaits study, in particular the surviving comptus roll drawn up by John Lynby, the abbey's fisherman, on September 29th 1442, with its list of expenses incurred in the operation of the fishery³⁷. A more adequate record of the existing remains has long

been needed, and a detailed survey of the earthworks was proposed by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in June 1990 as part of the overall research strategy for the site; arrangements are now in hand for this to be undertaken by staff of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), probably early in March 1992. Any future archaeological examination, particularly any work which may involve the environmental sampling of the pond sites or the examination of the abbey's kitchen-middens could add considerably to our present state of knowledge³⁸. Indeed, while this article was in the final stages of preparation the Oxford Archaeological Unit were beginning to examine the abbey kitchen, where the ash layers from the raking-out of hearths have turned out to include valuable assemblages of fish bones; these have yet to be examined in detail, but I am informed that sea fish are undoubtedly represented³⁹.

Acknowledgements

The basis of this paper is the work of those earlier investigators whose observations have been acknowledged in the text and references. I would also like to record my gratitude to Dr Brian Atkins of the Eynsham History Group and Graham Keevill of the Oxford Archaeological Unit for their helpful comments on an earlier draft.

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 17. I am grateful to Graham Keevill for this information.
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 19. Chambers, 1936, p.77.
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THE KEY TO EYNESHAM ABBEY?

by Brian Atkins

While some paving stones were being laid at the home of Elizabeth and Peter Way, No 4, Abbey Place, Eynsham, in February 1984, an iron key was unearthed, 16cm (about 6 inches) in length, and weighing 110gm (Fig.1). It has been dated by the Ashmolean Museum to the late 14th or early 15th century.

The size and age of the key, and especially the site of its discovery, conspire to link it with Eynsham Abbey. Abbey Place, formerly Abbey Terrace, is believed to have been the site of the main entrance or gateway to the abbey precinct. Such a large key (and by extension its lock), seems appropriate only for a substantial door or gate. It could hardly have had a domestic or vernacular use.

Pending further research, it is suggested that:

- a) The key belonged to Eynsham Abbey.
- b) It owes its survival to post-Dissolution events when the materials of the abbey were 'recycled' into local building projects. Almost all the stonework, footings included, was progressively robbed out; roof tiles were probably reused; floor tiles served *as* hard-core for roads; lead was readily adaptable; and timbers would have been reworked or used as fuel. But such a large key (and its lock) would have been of no value to villagers building, or rebuilding, or repairing their cottages. It would have been ignored or tossed aside, to be rediscovered more than 400 years later.
- c) It has to be said that the Oxford Archaeological Unit, excavating further to the south, have unearthed other abbey keys of a comparable size. But is it too fanciful to suggest that this key, discovered so close to the principal entrance, may have been the one which once controlled access to the *curia* or courtyard which lay to the west of the chief buildings?

Perhaps one day the great iron lock with which this key once mated will come to light.

Acknowledgements

Especial thanks to Peter Way, the owner of the key, who had it provisionally dated by Arthur MacGregor of the Ashmolean Museum, and drew it to my attention.

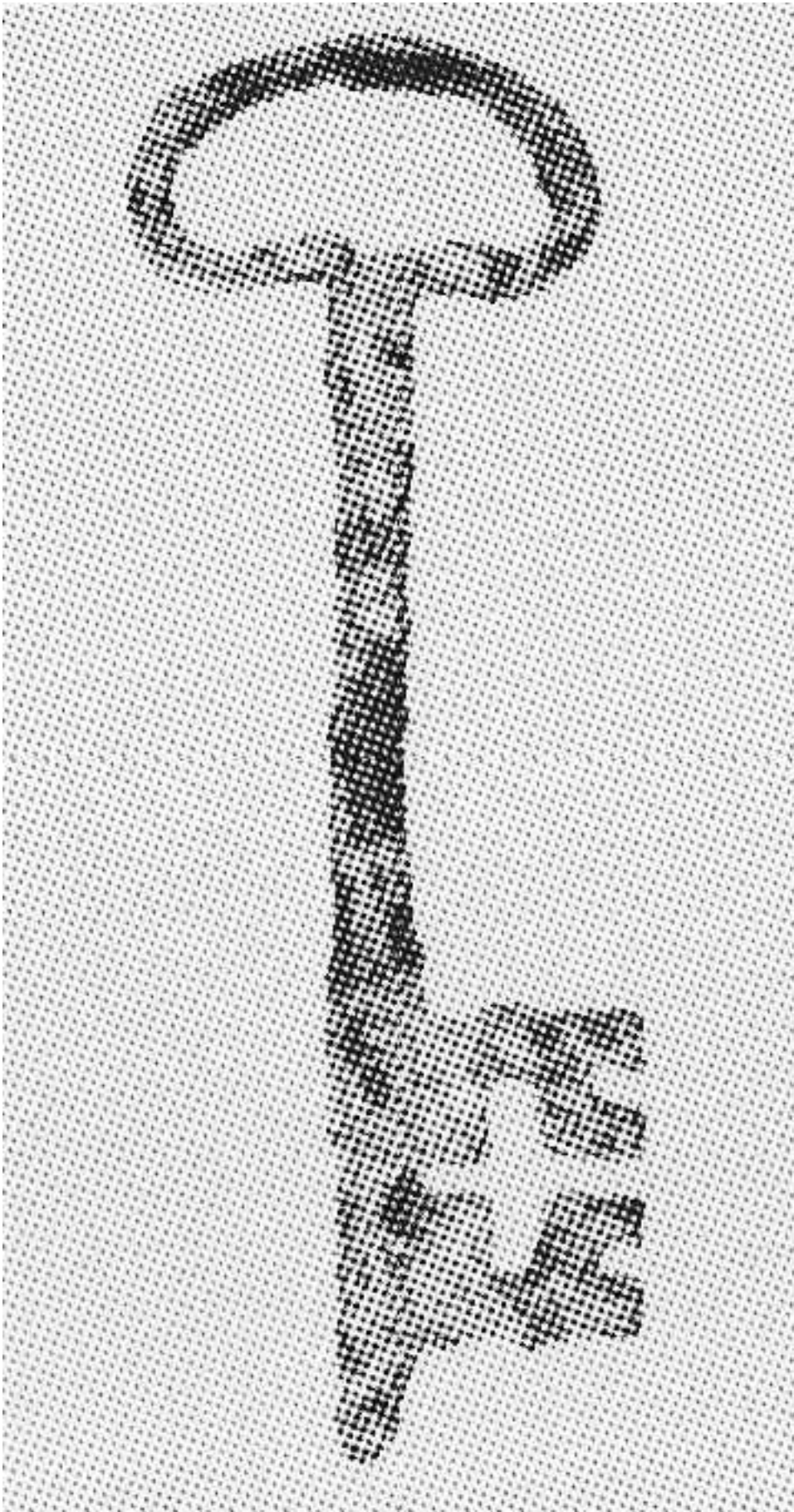


Figure 1. The key, photographed at true scale

MORE ON EYNESHAM'S POPULATION: NOTES FROM THE VISITATION RETURNS

By Donald S. Richards

In principle, every three years the dioceses of the Anglican Church required written information about the state of their parishes from the incumbents. These are the Visitation Returns. The earliest surviving material of this sort for Eynsham dates from the first half of the 18th century, and, as with other Oxfordshire parishes, there are many gaps in the coverage. Since one of the questions usually concerned the size of the parish, I had hopes of finding useful population data for the period before the first census of 1801, which would complement Brian Atkins's speculations based on the number of recorded baptisms¹. The demographers' method, as he clearly describes it, involves arriving at a 'smoothed' figure for each year (by taking a 'nine-year running average') and then using a 'multiplier', that is, a figure that represents the number of all other inhabitants one presumes there to have been for each woman giving birth. In the case of Eynsham the 'multiplier' 31 gave a good match with the early census figures.

If one has a figure for the number of houses, the population can be estimated by using another 'multiplier', the average number of persons presumed to be living in each. This is the method Brian Atkins used to arrive at a population figure for 1650, based on the 114 to 118 houses that John Whiting's survey of that year listed for Eynsham. Assuming five persons to a dwelling, that gives a total of 570 - 590 for the village itself, not the whole parish in this case.

The Visitation Returns for Eynsham in the 18th century give various estimates of the number of houses in the parish. It must be admitted that they do not inspire great confidence. In 1738 the Vicar, John Goole, making his return from Witney on 17th July, and describing himself as 'Master of the Free Grammar School' there, wrote²:

My Lord,

The Parish of Eynsham lets for about £2000 p[er] an[um] it comprehends 160 houses and 153 families; of which near twenty are situate upon a large Heath a mile from the Church [i.e. Freeland]. There is no Family of Note in it: no village or Hamlet in it, unless the Houses upon the Heath may be taken for one.

A problem here is the discrepancy between the number of houses and families. Does it mean that seven houses were empty or that several families (however

defined) occupied more than one house? However, applying a 'multiplier' 5 to the number of families gives a population of 765, while the 'Atkins figure' for this year is 710, give or take a small fraction. This is a reasonable match, considering the crudity of both methods.

In 1768 the Vicar, Thomas Nash, partly echoed the previous return - and the tendency to rely on earlier responses is not uncommon - when he wrote³:

The Parish of Eynsham extends from East to West about 3 miles, and from North to South about 2 miles. There is no Hamlet nor any Family of Note in the Parish, & it contains about 100 & 50 Houses.

Five times 150 (a decrease) gives a rough population figure of 750, but the baptism calculation suggests 844. Atkins's graph based on the Parish Records does show a dip down for an earlier moment, *circa* 1750 but from then on there is a steady rise until late in the 19th century. This makes Thomas Nash's next return for 1771 seem very peculiar. He wrote", 'The number of Houses are upwards of ninety which are inhabited by Farmers & Poor People.' Even allowing that to mean 99 houses - and surely it would be an odd way to express as many as a 100 - it signifies a large drop in the available housing in only four years. If we take the statement at face value, what are we to imagine happened to fifty or more houses? Were they abandoned?

For 1774 Nash gave no figure for the number of houses, but he somehow managed to expand the parish dimensions !⁵

The Parish of Eynsham is near four miles in length and three in Breadth - consists of a number of poor People and about twelve Farmers who are chiefly Tenants at rack-rent.

The 1793 Return offers only confusion, because, apart from the fact that it pares down the parish again, it hazards a figure for the houses of one group, all the farmers and day labourers, without doing the same for another, the tradesmen⁶:

The Parish of Eynsham is near three Miles in length and two in Breadth. There is no Hamlet belonging to it - The Manor house is occupied by Mrs Duberley - the others by Tradesmen - Farmers & Day Labourers in the whole fifty or sixty houses - There is no Family of Note in the Parish.

However, if my interpretation of this ambiguous wording and punctuation is correct, the information is suggestive. In 1771 and 1774 the population at large could be classed as 'Farmers & Poor People', but by 1793 'Tradesmen' have become a separate, significant element. Indeed, if there is any validity at all in an inference from the number of the houses mentioned, they were possibly more than half the population. Is that credible?

The returns for 1771 and 1793 were signed by Thomas Nash, who was an absentee vicar. From the so-called *Diocesan Book*, which contains abstracts of the clergy's returns, starting from 1781,⁷ we know that by that year Mr Nash was residing in Gloucestershire, where he had livings at Cowley and Witcombe, near Cheltenham. He employed a series of curates at Eynsham, Mr Davis of Merton College in the years c.1775 - 1784 (according to the *V.C.H. Oxon.* xii, p. 149), and:

1784 Dr. Sheffield, Provost of Worcester, Curate, whenever he can attend.

1790 Mr. Landon, Fellow of Worcester College, serves this Church, Salary £25 with Surplice Fees, House & Glebe Land; licensed June 17.

1796 'Mr. John Bentinck, Curate.'

None of these three is mentioned in the *V.C.H.* In his 1793 Return Nash added: The Revd Mr Landon: B:D: Fellow & Tutor of Worcester College is my Curate - who resides in my Parsonage House with his Mother when he is disengaged from College Business.

As for the parish data with which we are concerned, an earlier *Diocesan Book* of 1759⁸ has a page headed 'Eynsham' which is blank, except for the names of two clergy, Dr Barton, warden of Merton College, and Mr Sandys, the latter against the date 1765. The other *Diocesan Book* under the year 1796 states 'No answer'. There is, however, a (draft?) return with no date and no signature, written in the hand of the new curate, Thomas Symonds. The surprise here is⁹: 'The Parish of Eynsham contains about 300 Houses.' This figure is an exaggeration, *as* unreliable as the earlier low figure. The 1802 Return¹⁰ quotes the total of the previous year's census, 1,166, and adds that that represents 183 families. In actual fact the census data recorded 208 families occupying 183 *houses*. The subsequent Visitation Returns for Eynsham refer, not always accurately, to the figures of population from the various censuses.

I allow myself one last irrelevant quotation. In 1831, when asked 'Is there a Parsonage House...fit for the residence of the Incumbent?' Mr Symonds, the vicar since 1826, replied, 'Yes. It is only too good for the value of the living.'¹¹ This is an ironic comment in the light of the relatively recent sale of the Vicarage by the Parsonages Board, as being too large and too expensive to maintain.

References and footnotes (see inside front cover for abbreviations)

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3. Ibid. pp. d. 558, fols. 222 ff.
4. Ibid. d. 561, fols. 221-4.
5. Ibid. d. 564, fols. 176-9.

6. Ibid. b. 10, fols. 29-30.
 7. Ibid. c. 327, p. 164.
 8. Ibid. d. 759.
 9. Ibid. b. 10, fols. 31-2.
 10. Ibid. d. 566, fols. 126-7. This is signed by Thomas Nash, but is filled in in the handwriting of Thomas Symonds, who also gives this information to one of the questions: 'The Revd Dr Nash the Vicar resides at Cowley near Cheltenham - The Revd Thomas Symonds the Curate resides with his Mother & Sisters at Witney but spends a good Part of his Time with his Parishioners. He serves no other Cure & is perfectly satisfied with his Stipend.' Note that the *Diocesan Book* (Ms. Oxf. Dioc. pp. c. 327, p. 262) adds for 1802 'Mr Tho Symonds of Witney not yet licd [=licenced]' Then - 'Oct 20 Mr Tho' Symonds licensed. Salary £50.' Did he operate as curate from 1797, as the V.C.H. states, to 1802 unlicensed?
 11. Ibid. pp. b. 38, fols. 87 ff.
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A visitor's brief impression of Eynsham in the 1930s!

In 1986 Pamela Richards received the following note from Christine Lillington, a member of the Bristol local history group¹.

"Just met Rupert Davies² who said that when he was a student (all of fifty years ago) Eynsham was a terrible place. He went to take a service and, waiting for a bus home, found his way to the local pub which was even more dreary than the Chapel! He has driven through recently and finds a great improvement."

1. The Malago Society, from whose journal we copied the 'Then & Now' idea for our centre pages.
2. Rupert E. Davies, sometimes Principal of Didsbury College, Bristol, wrote a major history of Methodism.



Abbey Street, looking south. Illustration from an old postcard, undated.



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have been re-sized to reduce the overall size
of this .pdf file.

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EYNESHAM CHARTERS

by Eric Gordon

8. Disputes with Hanborough - mill-pool, pigsties, bracken &c.

(Eynsham Cartulary, nos.350 & 659-662¹)

In one sense history is a sea of sameness, a kaleidoscope, in which the same pieces for ever make new patterns. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. You sit on your rock, and you look down into the dark water, swirling, heaving, caressing, threatening: it houses new crabs, new jelly-fish, new sea-weed, but somehow it is just the same: you dip your finger into its chill embrace, but nothing is different.

So it seems with the story that follows - petty squabbles that last for centuries, and erupt into violence: bastions of power, fearful for security: human patterns, which persist, no matter what the bureaucrats do: masses of simple folk, struggling to survive. But it is good to see ourselves, as we look into those medieval waters, and (if we are Christians) to see God working his purpose out.

We begin with charter no.350 in c.1230², only 15 years after Magna Carta, and only 60 years after Thomas à Becket: but it is Eynsham, 750 years ago. This charter deals first with the water-supply to Eynsham abbey's mill-pool, but moves quickly to other grievances.

Concerning Hanborough

The King: to the Sheriff of Oxfordshire: greeting.

Our men of Hanborough have complained bitterly about the Abbot of Eynsham: they tell us that the Abbot, without authority or justification, has done despite to our rights, as well as serious damage to themselves, by raising the level of the pool which serves his Eynsham mills (*stangnum molendinorum suorum*), and thereby spoiling our meadowland.

Furthermore, they allege that he is doing both us and them grave wrong, in that he does not allow them to enjoy their rights of common pasture (*communam suam pasture*) in the said Abbot's land in Eynsham, or to set up their pigsties (*porkerias suas leuare*) in the said Abbot's woodland, or to gather ferns (*feugas*) therein, as has been their custom, in the days of the Kings of England that went before us, and in our own time, right up to the time of the present Abbot.

Accordingly we bid you to gather together a jury of upright and law-worthy men from your shire, to wit, from those who live in that neighbourhood and from others who are better acquainted with the truth of the matter, and also to summon the said Abbot to the meeting, and, in the presence of that jury, to take evidence on solemn oath, making careful enquiry of

the same men, as to whether the said Abbot has in fact raised the level of his mill-pool, as is alleged, and as to whether the said men of ours ought to enjoy rights of common, and have been accustomed to do so, on the land of the said Abbot of Eynsham (*habere communam in terra*), or to set up their pigsties in his woodland, or to gather fern therein.

And if, through that enquiry, you determine that the said Abbot has indeed thus raised the level of his mill-pool, and that these said men of ours had in fact enjoyed those customary rights in the land and woodland of the said Abbot, then, in compliance with the oath of that same jury, you are to cause the mill-pool to be assessed in depth (*amensurari facias*), and left precisely as right and custom had it: and likewise you are to see that those same men of ours enjoy all the above-mentioned rights on the land and in the woodland of the said Abbot, as are their due and have been their custom. Witness (*Teste*) &c.

In 1086, *Domesday Book*⁴ listed a water-mill - 'a mill at 12s and 450 eels' - amongst Eynsham abbey's assets. The survey did not often record eels with its Oxfordshire mills, and then did so only in round numbers: two nearby instances are on the Evenlode - Bladon, 125, and Cassington, 75. Caught in the works, or deliberately trapped, they were doubtless a welcome delicacy⁵.

Charter 350 speaks of 'mills' - in the plural - so there were certainly two of them, in the one situation, and in fact there may have been three⁶. Each mill would have had its own water-wheel and grindstones, but all in one building. The general aim of the abbey would probably be to concentrate all Eynsham milling in its own mills.

It was alleged that the abbey had raised its mill-dam, and piled up too great a head of water. More grinding would generate more profit. Was this yet another of Abbot Adam's over-ambitious projects⁷. The pool was perhaps a rounded pond, adjacent to the mills. Possibly it was only a mill-stream, diverting water from up-river to the mills, and now enlarged. In either case any flat and low land, hard by the water, would now be liable to flooding, and perhaps permanently inundated. Such land, even a few square yards of it, provided pasture, and would be of great value to the King's Hanborough tenants. Pockets were touched, even royal ones! And, not surprisingly, the abbey's neighbours were angry.

Further complaints were added. The Abbot, they said, had taken away some traditional privileges of theirs:

- i. The sharing of pasture on Eynsham land. Such 'intercommoning' often took place where a boundary between manors ran across heathland or waste, and was ill-defined. But perhaps the Hanborough men had wider objectives - sharing pasture, for example, on substantial areas of Eynsham arable, after the harvest had been gathered in, or in years when fields lay fallow, or letting beasts loose on Eynsham

meadowland after haymaking?

ii Setting up pigsties in Eynsham woodlands, and so sharing the nuts, which the swine would nuzzle out. Well-fed pigs were of immense value to medieval man. Perhaps little shelters were set up for them (as also for the swine-herds!)? Perhaps there were roughly fenced enclosures which could be moved around the woodlands?

iii The gathering of 'ferns' on abbey-land. The reference is probably to bracken, as used for stabling and thatching. Traffic in furze (gorse) and fern from Eynsham went on for centuries⁸.

So much for charter 350: in the second Eynsham cartulary it occurs again with minor textual variations, as no.659, followed by the related charters, nos.660-662. Here is no.660, the jury's verdict:

Jury (*iurata*): concerning the dispute between the Abbot of Eynsham and the land-holders (*tenentes*) of Hanborough: about rights of common in Eynsham.

The members of the jury, concerned with the dispute between the Abbot of Eynsham and our Lord the King's men in Hanborough, about the mill-pool, the pigsties, the pastures, and the fem: Robert de Rothomago, William de Broke, Otto well' de Asthall, Peter de Cassington, William le Franklin de Thorpe, Nicholas Piscator de Somerford, Walter le' Canter, Ralph de Wootton, Martin de Bladon, Roger Rouncy, Peter de Shipton and Stephen de Mora.

These men testify on oath that the Abbot of Eynsham has raised the water-level of the pool which serves his Eynsham mills, by half a foot more than he ought, and that this is to the detriment of our Lord the King's land-holders of Hanborough: and that the situation has appertained for the last two years: and that the loss to the land-holders should be assessed at 20 shillings per annum.

They also testify on oath that the land-holders of Hanborough have no rights of common in the fields (*communam in campis*) of Eynsham, nor the Abbot in the fields of Hanborough: but that the said land-holders of Hanborough have a sound claim to, and have been accustomed to enjoy (*bene habent & habere consueuerunt*), rights of common, with their beasts, in the heath and woodland of Heyewode (*in bruera & bosco de la Heyewode*).

They also testify on oath that, in the days of King Henry, father of King John, when Godfrey was Abbot of Eynsham, the Hanborough men came and had converse with the Lord Abbot and the cellarer of the same house, *as* to whether they might set up their pigsties in his woodland of Heyewode, and that they were given permission to do so, on condition that each man from the manor of Hanborough did two days of boon-works in Eynsham, in the autumn of each year, without food provision by the abbey (*dual precarias autumpnales .. sine cibo*), and that each man should give one hen at Christmas and ten hen's eggs at Easter to the abbey, during the Abbot's good pleasure.

They also testify on oath that the said land-holders of Hanborough have no right to take

any ferns on the heath of the said Abbot, and that, if they do so, they should be apprehended by the Abbot's servants and fined in the Abbot's court.

We see that, in regard to the mill-pool, the Abbot lost his case, and had to lower the water by 6 inches and pay 40s. (a substantial sum) as compensation. He also had to climb down and admit some of the Hanborough claims to rights of common. They were correct in regard to 'the Heath' and 'Heyewode', but not elsewhere in Eynsham. Those permissible areas were (very roughly) what we would now call Eynsham Park and Freeland (see Fig. 1).

This was higher ground, with poorer soil, in the northern and north-western parts of the Eynsham estate, nearer to Wychwood forest. The Hanborough men had rights of intercommoning there, and could (for a fee) set up their pigsties: but neither there nor anywhere else could they extract bracken. The fee for the pigsties was partly in labour, partly in produce.

The bargain about pigsties went back to Henry II, and to Abbot Godfrey (1152-96). By shrewd management the abbey was at that point developing and defining its economic base. Abbot Godfrey and his cellarer had agreed the fee - 2 days' work per annum, for each Hanborough man, in the abbey's harvest-fields, each of them bringing his own food for the day, and each also contributing a hen at Christmas and ten eggs at Easter to the abbey-larder. No one could forget their dues! Not many years later the Eynsham monk, Edmund, in the course of his Vision, encountered a much-chastened and woefully penitent Abbot Godfrey in purgatory!

After 1230 ill-feeling, and open dispute, and even violence, lingered on for years: and Hanborough men, assuming perhaps an aura of holiness by bringing with them their chaplain, Thomas Cave, took to driving their beasts into the abbey's growing crops. Finally, in 1370, the quarrel reached the King's Bench: and charter no.661 is a long, and rambling, and somewhat confused, summary of the rival cases. Extracts follow. We do not know the outcome of the matter. It was left for the King to think about! The Hanborough men were his tenants, but the Church was strong. He would be much exercised!

Plea (*Placita*): concerning Hanborough: from the records of the King's Bench (*inter recorda de Banco*): for Holy Trinity term: in the 43rd year (sc., of the reign of Edward III).

....Wherefore the said Abbot, through his attorney, John Corbridge, now brings his formal complaint before this court, averring that the said John [sc., Smith] and all the others likewise &c., on the Monday next after the Feast of the Birth of St. John Baptist, in the 30th year of the present King (*regis nunc*), using violence and carrying arms, to wit, swords, and

bows and arrows, and cudgels, had set some of their beasts loose, to graze amongst the Abbot of Eynsham's freshly growing corn, to wit, his wheat, barley and rye, as also his beans, peas and oats (*frumentum & ordeum & siliginem, fabas, pisas & auenas*), as well as his grassland, to the tune &c: the beasts, to wit, horses, oxen and cows, sheep and pigs, had trampled upon the crops, and eaten them up: the trespass had continued from the above-mentioned Monday right through till the day when a writ was sued out against them (*usque diem impetracionis breuis*): they had continued to do this on sundry occasions, and committed other offences &c., to the serious loss &c., and in breach of the King's peace: wherefore the Abbot states that damage has been done and loss incurred to the tune of £1000, and accordingly he brings this case forward &c....

...And the said John Smith, and all the others, through their attorney, Thomas Hininden, put forward their defence the place, where according to the said Abbot, the said trespass took place, is, in fact, a certain hamlet called Tilgarsley, in which, although it is within the bounds of the said manor of Eynsham, the said John Smith and all the others have rights of common, with their beasts of any kind, both in its wastelands and ploughlands, its meadows and pastures, because those rights go with the holdings, which they severally hold in Hanborough. They state that the rights apply to wastelands and pasturelands throughout the year in every year; to ploughlands between the cutting and removal of the crops and the reseeding of the land, but through the whole year in every third year, when the land lies fallow; in other words, all the arable lands in that hamlet should be seeded for two consecutive years and lie fallow in the third; also, to meadows, between the cutting and removal of the hay and the Feast of the Purification of Blessed Mary

.... On the various occasions, about which the said Abbot now complains &c., sundry parcels of arable land in the said hamlet, which ought in that year to have lain fallow, had been seeded by the said Abbot and others: accordingly - both as to those parcels of land, thus seeded, which ought at that time to have lain fallow, as also in the other wastelands, meadows and pasturelands of the said hamlet - they had simply exercised their rights of common, letting their beasts loose there, exactly as was permissible: at no other times (*absque hoc quod ipsi aliis temporibus*) had they fed their animals on the said Abbot's crops or grass

They [also] say that eighteen years ago one Thomas de Langley carried out a perambulation of Wychwood forest, and enlarged its boundary on the Eynsham side (*fecit quandam perambulationem citra forestam de Wychewode, elargando bundas predictas*)

And he [sc., the Abbot] says that the said hamlet lies within the purlieu (*pura[ees]*) of that forest [sc., but not within its bounds]

To our modern ears (mostly town-based ones) the phrase, 'the hamlet of Tilgarsley', suggests a small group of country-cottages, with their tiny gardens and sheds, tucked away somewhere, amongst the trees and fields, on the great estate of medieval Eynsham: as such, it vanished, after the Black Death, 1349-50, and even the site is

unknown: though a good case can be made out for its having been where Bowles Farm now stands, about a mile up the Freeland road from the A40¹⁰.

To medieval ears, and indeed until very recent centuries, 'the hamlet of Tilgarsley' would imply much more. It would involve the countryside all around, and across it a scatter of other dwellings, a few larger, but for the most part tiny. And all of it would constitute one community, one place, an interdependent and interlocking economic unit. The lack of modern transport, and of centralized supply-services, and the general need for shared labour, forced the inhabitants to be more or less self-sufficient. Whether they liked it or not, all would know and work for and with each other.

It appears that Tilgarsley had separate roots from those of Eynsham. It is not fanciful to think of a time when two minor Anglo-Saxon headmen, Tilgar (his name survived in 'Tilgar's ditch' in Eynsham abbey's foundation charter bounds in 1005) and Egon (or some such name, ultimately forming part of the word 'Eynsham') occupied adjoining estates, approximately equal in size. By 1005 they had come into single ownership, and were given together to Eynsham abbey. If the whole were thought of as roughly circular, the western half (up to Freeland and down to Twelve Acre Farm) would be Tilgarsley and the eastern half Eynsham.

A sense of separateness survived through the Middle Ages, surfacing, it seems, in such disputes as that of charter no.661. And its date suggests that perhaps it was then hastened on by the recent devastation and depopulation of Tilgarsley. In later times the whole manor was sometimes referred to as EYNSHAM, TILGARSLEY, and NEWLAND¹¹. Before the Black Death Tilgarsley seems to have been slightly more prosperous and stable than Eynsham¹².

Other factors, which contributed to Tilgarsley's separateness, were the comparatively recent date, and the piecemeal manner, in which it had been deforested, and made distinct from Wychwood forest. To some extent, like Hanborough itself, it was still thought of as part of the forest¹³: and forests were royal preserves, with their own courts and officials &c., and so also (to medieval eyes) were their purlieus, that is, rough neighbouring areas, still somewhat wild, where game might seek temporary refuge. Conflict with the King and the King's tenants would, in such an area, be more likely and more frequent.

But Tilgarsley also had its own arable &c., and after the Black Death all of it passed into direct abbey-administration: and when the Abbot tried to experiment with a 4-year cycle of crops and fallow instead of the traditional 3-year one, the fur flew!

Footnotes and references (see inside front cover for abbreviations).

1. *Eynsham Cart.* Vol.1, pp.241-2; Vol.2, pp.104-8. Full translations of all five of these charters, together with further notes, have been deposited in the E.H.G.'s archives in the Eynsham branch library.
2. The date seems clear: for charter no.350 is written into our cartulary immediately below no.349 which is a papal missive, precisely dated to March 26th 1230; and it is in the same hand. What is more, for decades after no.350, this cartulary was not used at all. No.351 cannot be earlier than 1264, when Abbot Alexander of Brackley began to reign. Maybe office-practice had grown very slack, and the cartulary neglected, after the inefficiency which led to Abbot Adam's deposition in 1228?
3. The Latin word, *stangnum* (spelt thus here) has links with Anglo-Norman *estank*, French *etang*, and English noun 'a stank', which survives in Scots English and in English dialects. Each of these words has a double meaning, 'pool' and 'dam'. They are related to the verb 'to stanch', meaning 'to check the flow of' (see *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, ed. Bothwell, and *Oxford English Dictionary*).
4. Morris, J. (Ed.) *Domesday Book: Oxfordshire*. Phillimore, 1978, f.155b.
5. Foreman, W.R.B. *Oxfordshire Mills*. Phillimore, 1983, pp.2-6.
6. *V.C.H.Oxon. Vol.12*, 1990 pp.141f.; Chambers, 1936, *passim*. For Mill End, see *Eynsham Cart.*, Vol.1, p.389 (no.570, Nov.1, 1342), 'in Eynsham, in the neighbourhood called Mill End (*in Egnesham in vico qui vocatur le Mullhende*): and compare *lb.*, p.388, Hythe End (*le Huthende*).
7. Gordon, 1990, p.132.
8. *V.C.H.Oxon, op.cit.*, p.129
9. see Gordon, 1990, pp.116ff.
10. *V.C.H.Oxon, op.cit.*, pp.115f.
11. *Ibid.* p.120a.
12. *Ibid.* pp.130f.
13. Even the suffix ley (or lea) meant woodland, or clearing, or open ground. See Chambers, 1936, p.108.

LORD'S FARM

The home of Margaret Foote

by Edward Hibbert

The two-storey farmhouse, now known as Lord's Farm, which stands on the corner of Queen Street and Oxford Road, was built in the late 17th or early 18th century of coursed limestone rubble and stones from Eynsham Abbey. A framed inscription with coat of arms in the farmhouse states that the earliest house on the site was built by William Avenel, Seneschal to the Count of Mortain at the battle of Hastings, and an early benefactor of the abbey. According to E.K.Chambers, 'The Avenels were people of consideration in Oxfordshire'. William's son, also William, married Helewisa, daughter of Walkelin Waard, a holder of Domesday manors. His other daughter, Dionysia, married Hugh de Chesney, who also endowed the abbey.

This house, or a later one on the site, was owned in 1414 by William del Fermereye². It was replaced, probably in the 16th century, by the house shown on the Corpus Christi College estate map of 1615. Fig.1 is a redrawing (without the beautiful colours) of the insert showing the corner of the village bounded by Pucke Lane (now Queen Street) and Thames Street (now Oxford Road). The house is shown on the corner and marked as the property of Richard Townesend.

The reconstruction by Brian Atkins³ of John Whiting's 1650 survey of Eynsham shows that the property was by then in the occupation of William Broadwater as copyhold of the Manor of Eynsham, and comprised 35 square perches (1059 square yards).

In the 18th and 19th centuries the house may have been occupied by two or three generations of a family called Lord. It is thought that James Lord lived there. He was the Eynsham mason who prepared an estimate in connection with the building of the Swinford Bridge (opened 1769), and was probably one of the principal sub-contractors on the project⁴. What is certain is that in 1837 the property is described as 'seven cottages and gardens' in the freehold ownership of Peter Lord 'for about 40 years'⁶. The same Peter Lord is described in the 1841 census as a coal dealer, and he died in 1850. A meadow of 6 acres 1 rood to the south of the Cassington Road known as 'Peter Lord's Meadow' was included in the 19th century deeds⁶.

The 'seven cottages' of 1837 probably included the row of buildings facing the Oxford Road and known as Lord's Row. These consisted of four cottages (until the 1950s when they were converted into two), built in two phases (Fig.2). Numbers 1 and 2 adjoining the main building appear on the enclosures map of 1800, but numbers

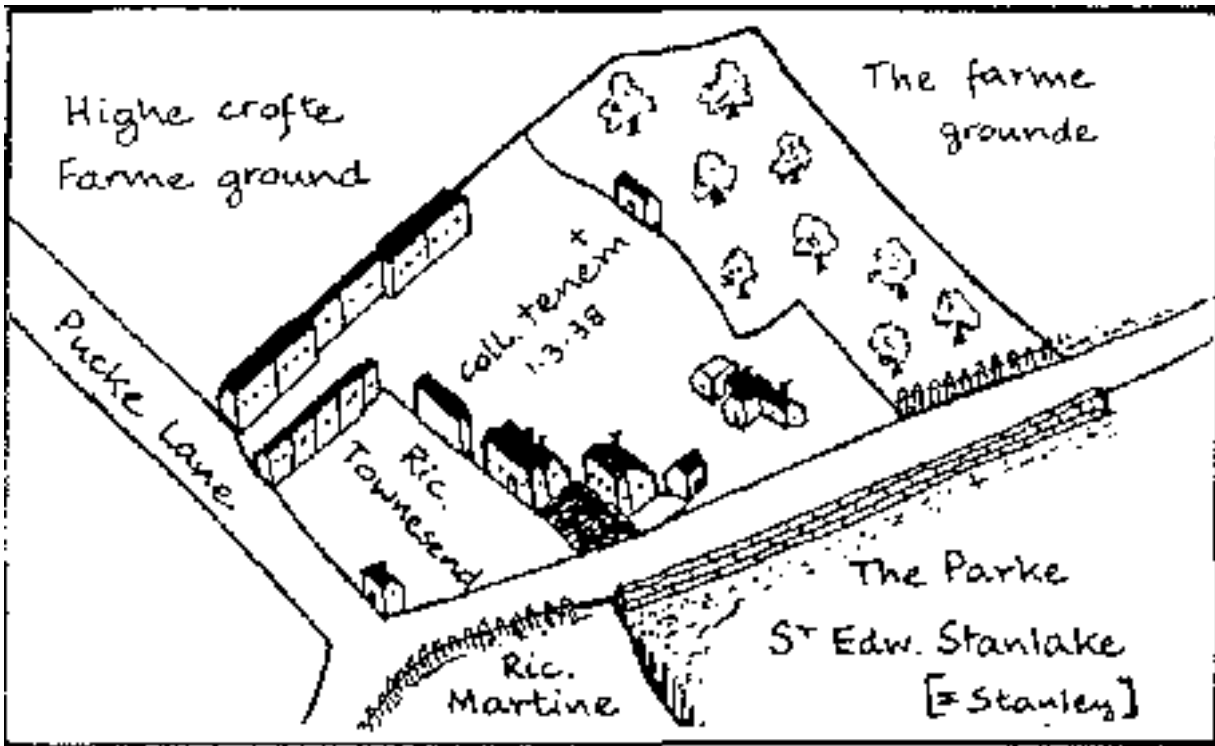


Fig.1 Inset on estate map of 1615.

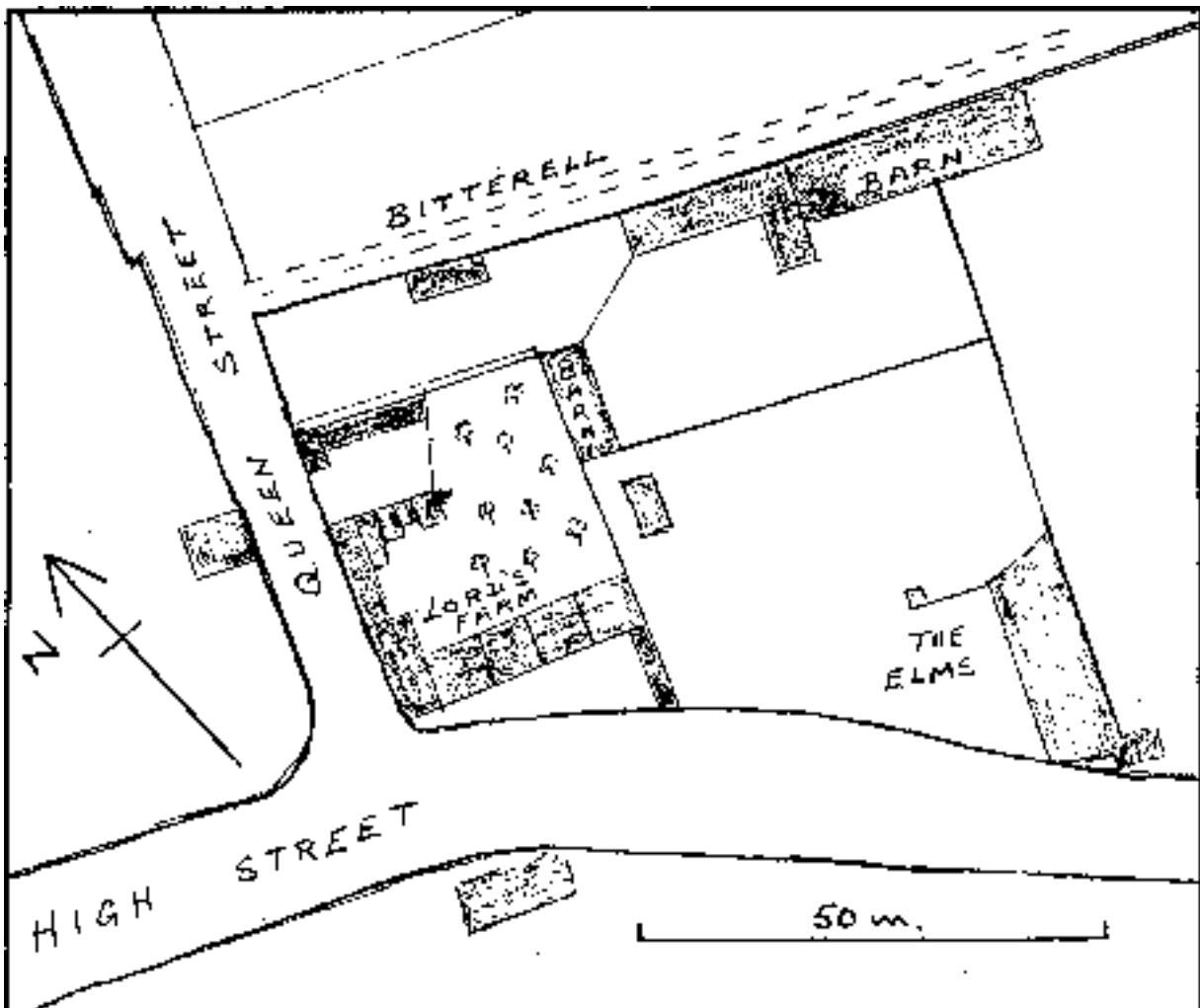


Fig.2 The site in the later 19th century; based on O.S. 1:2500 map of 1876.



Fig. 3 (above)
Lord's Farm and Lord's Row, in 1992.

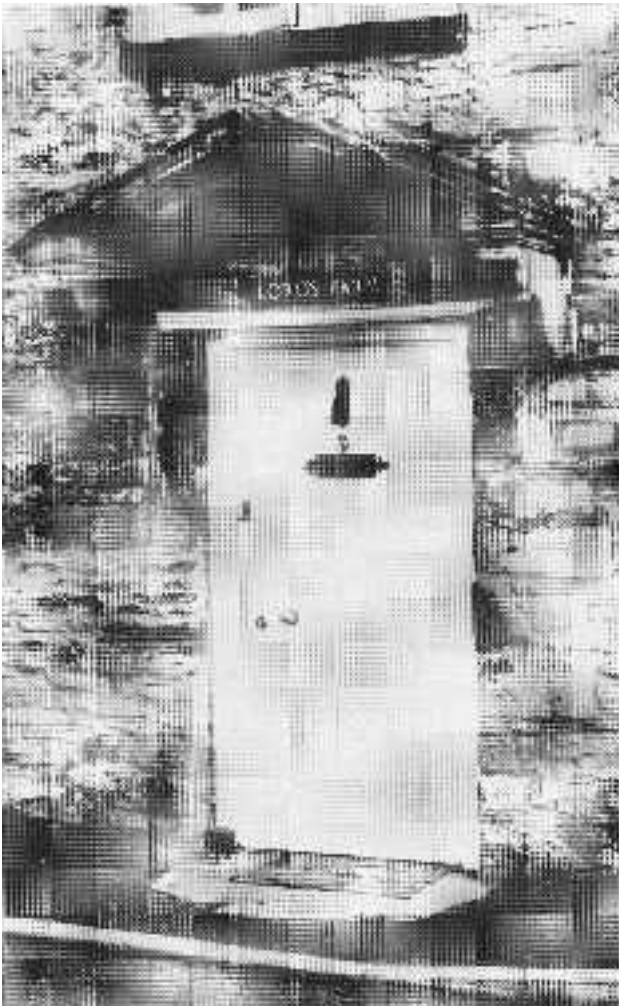


Fig. 4 (left)
The front door in 1992.

3 and 4 were added later. It is said that around 1910 number 4 (the most easterly) was occupied by Frederick Browne, an Eynsham cycle repairer, who was later sentenced to death with William Kennedy for the murder of a policeman'.

Lord's Row is included with the farmhouse, attached barn and stable in the schedule of listed buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest, Grade II, the cottages being 'included for group value'.

The present farmhouse (Fig.3) was originally of one storey, the beam which runs the length of the north wall of the landing being the central roof beam, supported by gable beams which can be seen in the small bedroom and linen cupboard. The outside stonework shows signs of a break in the continuity, just below the first floor windows. The present stairs, front bow window, and cupboard doors with their hinges and catches are all early 18th century. In 1954 the existing Victorian grates were removed to expose Tudor fireplaces, believed to be built of stones from the abbey⁸. The one in the front room on the south side has a fine beam, ingle-nook seat, and recess to store the salt or keep the kindling. The dining room was once the farm kitchen and has a loft beam in fine condition. The large open fireplace in this room has an ingle-nook seat, a small shelf, bacon hooks, and a cherrywood beam for the little boys to stand on when they swept the chimney. A wall of brick and stone has replaced the ingle-nook seat on the right of the fireplace. When the upper storey was added, the stairs must have been beside the fireplace of the old kitchen, because one stair is visible in the cupboard. The stone stairs to the cellar are wide and very fine. There is a tradition that there was a passage from this cellar to the abbey, but it is more likely to have been merely a drain to the south. An opening has been uncovered on the left of the south wall of the cellar. The present kitchen and room above it, of limestone rubble with some Flemish bond brickwork, were added to the original stone cottage, being mainly rebuilt around 1800.

The front door of the farmhouse, surmounted by an open pediment hood on carved brackets, is late 18th century (Fig.4). The house has sash windows, and the ground floor window fronting Queen Street has wooden shutters. The large barn in Queen Street is connected by a stone wall to an 18th century two-storey stable which retains its original cobblestone floor, manger and hay loft. Adjoining the stable was a two-seater privy⁹.

In 1919 the property was sold by George Harold Febery, a Gloucestershire farmer, and Blandford Bushnell Febery, a butcher from Stow-on-the-Wold¹⁰, to John Treadwell, also a farmer. It remained in the Treadwell family until 1947 when it was bought by Mrs Joyce Catherine Price. In 1950 she sold it to an estate agent, Ernest Heritage, the premises then being known as Wadhurst.

Two years later he sold the whole property, including the four cottages, to a remarkable lady, Miss Margaret Bunbury Foote, the subject of the second part of this article, who was to own it for more than 30 years.

After buying her home in 1952 Margaret Foote restored to it the traditional name of 'Lord's Farm', and set about the work of restoration, of both the house and the 'Lord's Row' cottages. Work on the cottages by G. Kimber & Son started in July 1959 under the direction of her architect, Thomas Rayson F.R.I.B.A.

Each of the cottages, she wrote⁸; 'consisted of one room downstairs, and one up, and a small "landing bedroom", except for No.2, which lacked this, and was therefore smaller than the others. One tap outside was shared by two cottages; and there was a terrible row of W.C.s and coal sheds running the length of the east boundary wall, and in full view of the Square.' The cottages, in order from west to east, were let to Mr Pimm at 7s. a week; Mr Bailey at 6s. a week; Mr Perkins at 6s.3d. a week; and Mrs Duffy also at 6s.3d. a week.

The plan was to turn the four cottages into two, each with a bathroom and kitchen. It was a major operation, and took till March 1960. During the work interesting discoveries were made. The Tudor fireplace with ingle-nook seat was uncovered in No.1. Its beam must have come from the Abbey, for there is a place in it for a mortice lock. Above it are the remains of a former beam, evidently destroyed by fire. Carved stones from the Abbey were found in the walls, and these have been placed over the present (new) porch. Under the floor were pieces of pottery and glass, including bits of an 11th century cooking pot (still with soot on it!); of a 16th century Rhineland jar; 17th and 18th century slipware (part of a large dish); part of a thick glass bottle; and bits of a very large 18th century jug, black-glazed inside, as made at Brill. Although the cottages numbered 3 and 4 are not as old (there is no indication of their date), Mr Kimber found that the back (i.e. north) wall of all four was of the same period throughout its length, and the mortar was like that used in the oldest part of St Edmund Hall, and at Kidlington Vicarage, both dating from the 13th or 14th century, and made of puddled clay.

A medieval well was found under the front wall of No.3, in such a position that water could be drawn from inside or outside the house. It was 4ft. across and about 12ft. deep to where it had already been partly filled up. I now regret not having it dug out and more thoroughly explored - and so does Mr Kimber.

The iron fence of the cottages is hand-made by a blacksmith, and is probably 100 years old. The sections are joined by mortise and tenon, held together by iron wedges - a method similar to that used in old carpentry. (A lady passing by asked if she might buy it).⁸

The improvement of the cottages won a prize from the Council for the Protection of Rural England, and the tiny front garden of No.1 has also won a conservation award.

When Margaret Foote died on 23 December 1983, she left Lord's Farm and Lord's Row to the Oxford Preservation Trust, of which she had been a member for many years, but the net income from the cottages was bequeathed to the British and Foreign Bible Society. After negotiations with the Trust this was commuted to a capital sum paid to the Bible Society in full settlement.

In December 1985 the Trust obtained planning consent for the demolition of an old building in the north-west corner of the farmyard of Lord's Farm, at one time occupied by Jimmy Davey, a harness maker, and later by Frederick Ayres, and described in the deeds as a 'stone store house (formerly a cottage)'; and for the building of a new house on the site. The Trust built a very fine natural stone wall along the line of the north wall of the stable¹¹, dividing off a portion of the previous Lord's Farm garden to form part of a newly defined plot, which was sold to John, George Pimm & Sons Ltd. in 1986. The replacement building had to be built to a high specification using natural Cotswold stone¹² and with a roof of artificial Cotswold slates of random size laid in courses diminishing in width from eaves level to the ridge¹³

My wife and I bought the new cottage, with its small walled garden and damson tree in December 1986, and moved in the following January. We decided to call it 'Lord's Cottage'.

The Trust was 'pleased with the appearance of the cottage, which had been bought by a member of the Trust'¹¹. It believed that the cottage 'will enhance the appearance of Queen Street and complete the attractive grouping of buildings which Miss Foote valued so greatly'¹⁴, and where she lived for over 30 years.

Miss Margaret Bunbury Foote (1899-1983)

Margaret Foote (Fig.5) was born in Oxford and educated at Somerville College where she read English. Her obituary in *Roundabout* records that 'her father was an army chaplain; and her mother an artist who spent some time in the Canadian wilderness - train drivers would drop her, all alone, at some remote spot in the morning and she would spend the day painting Indian chiefs and their people, and the train would pick her up in the evening! Margaret inherited this adventurous and indomitable spirit - which must have been enhanced in 1914 when she found herself

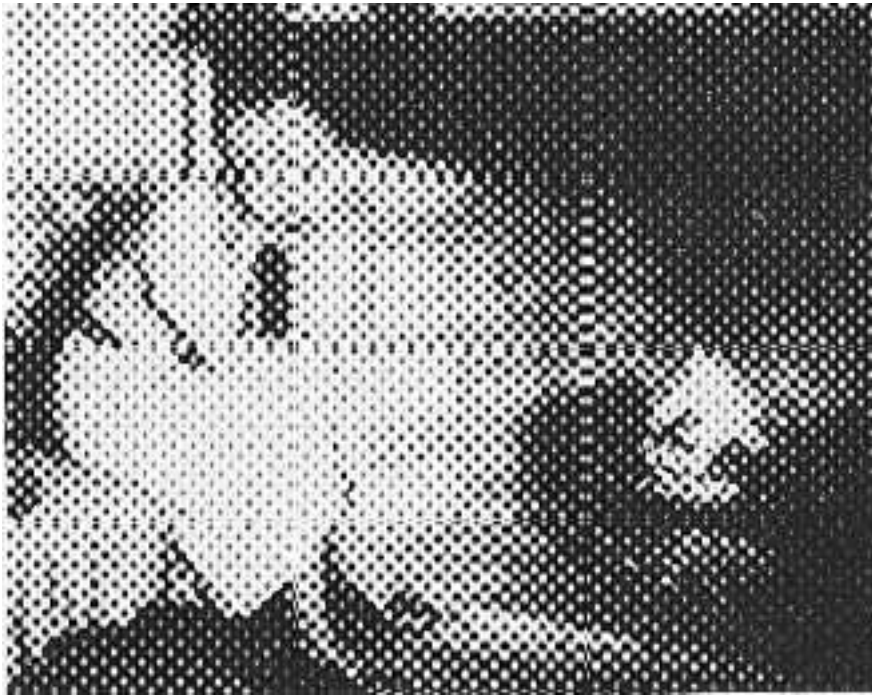


Fig. 5 Margaret Foote at Lord's Farm in 1954

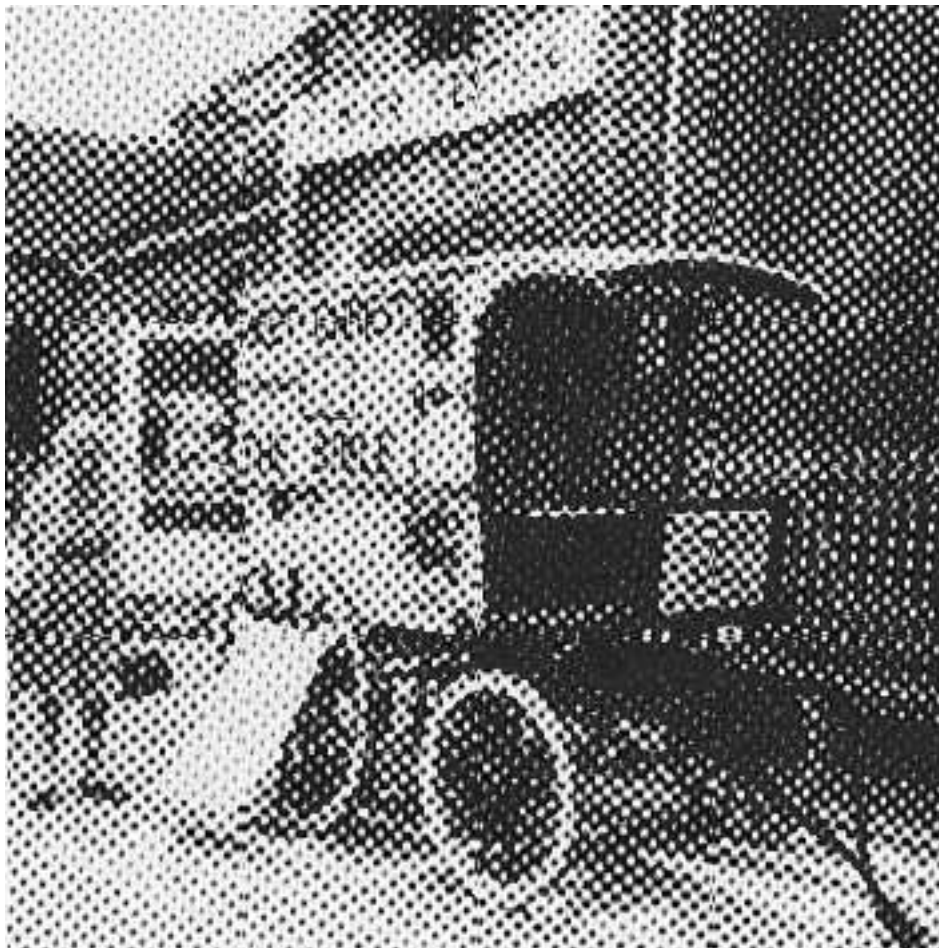


Fig. 6 Margaret Foote with the Bible cart outside St Leonard's, ca. 1980.

inside Germany at the outbreak of the First World War; her story of the journey home was quite hair-raising' ¹⁵.

Margaret left her mother's collection of oil paintings of American Indians, made in 1895, to the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

During the Second World War she worked for the Y.W.C.A. and subsequently devoted a great deal of her energy to the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society. On behalf of the latter organization she was regularly to be seen selling bibles from an old bread van outside St Leonard's, where she ran the church bookstall for 30 years (Fig.6).

The old horse-drawn bread van, originally belonging to Biggers, had become Margaret's trademark. Discovered derelict in the village, it had been repaired, repainted, fitted with shelves, and stocked with bibles and other Christian texts. For many years it took part in the annual carnival procession through the village streets to the playing fields. In the 1955 carnival it was hauled by the vicar, the Revd Stuart Blanch (later Archbishop of York), and the Baptist minister, the Revd R.J.Hamper, both dressed as Benedictine monks. The front of the van bore the inscription: 'To the Glory of God and to commemorate the thousandth anniversary of the birth A.D.955 of AELFRIC, Bible Scholar and the first Abbot of Eynsham'. The van was redecorated several times during the next 27 years, but this inscription remained.

Margaret held regular bible study meetings at Lord's Farm, and when she retired as secretary of the Eynsham Bible Society the vicar, the Revd Peter Ridley wrote 'it has been part of her vocation to befriend university undergraduates from overseas and to share with them the Word of the good news of Jesus Christ ... what an example she has given to all of us of faithful Christian service over so many years' ¹⁶.

In his report on the Church Restoration Appeal, Charles Caine said, 'I cannot help being reminded of those staunch friends of the Appeal whose lives have run their course - Margaret Foote whose Morris Minor was the star attraction of our first Treasure Sale, indomitable in her faith and charity ...¹⁷. Joan Weedon described her as 'one of Eynsham's most illustrious inhabitants ... she devoted her life to the propagation of Christianity' ¹⁸.

Margaret Foote was a woman of many and varied interests - Bible study, her church, local history and architecture, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Eynsham Society and, not least, Lord's Farm and her garden. There she nurtured and cherished a profusion of wild and cultivated plants, regularly on view during the village's annual 'Open Gardens' weekend.

References and footnotes (see inside front cover for abbreviations)

1. Chambers, 1936, p.31.
2. *Op.cit.* p.82.
3. E.R., no.6, 1989, p.46.
4. E.de Villiers, *Swinford Toll Bridge (E.H.G., 1969)*, pp15-16.
5. Oxon. Archives. Palm IV/5 (map and index to map of 1837).
6. The charity boards in the Bartholomew Room also list two Lords. John Lord was a benefactor of the new 'School of Ensham' in 1703; and James Lord (possibly the bridge builder) gave the interest of £100 to the 'Poor of Ensham' in 1809.
7. For a full account of this story, see E.R., no.8, 1991, pp.30-36.
8. Notes left by Margaret Foote.
9. A photograph of the privy, taken by Sue Chapman, is shown on p.75 of *Cotswold Privies* by Mollie Harris, Chatto & Windus, 1984.
10. Possibly trustees, rather than owners?
11. Oxford Preservation Trust Annual Report, 1987, p.8
12. The stone is from Minster Lovell quarry.
13. Planning consent DW 1522/85L of 18 December 1985.
14. Oxford Preservation Trust Annual Report, 1986, p.8.
15. *Roundabout* (Eynsham churches newsletter), February 1984.
16. *Eynsham Parish News*, September 1980.
17. E.R., no.5, pp.30-31.
18. *Oxford Times*, 6 January 1984.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements and thanks to the Oxford Preservation Trust, Mrs V.Tremmele (Margaret Foote's cousin and executrix), Mrs Joan Weedon, Mrs S.E Cleal of Lord's Farm, Mr P.Whittaker of No.1 Lord's Row, Dr Brian Atkins, and Mr William Bainbridge; all for help in various ways.

THE STORY OF A COIN

by Joseph Luna

(Joseph is a 7-year-old pupil at Eynsham County Primary School.)

I found a 200-year-old coin in my garden at 3 Newland Close, Eynsham, when I was digging by my back door. I was hoping to find something interesting. I hadn't found anything before.

When I had dug down about 30cm I hit the coin with my trowel. I washed it with plain tap-water to clean off the mud, and saw the date which was 1795, the number '20', and some writing which I couldn't make out.

I took the coin to school and showed it to my teacher, Mrs Pamela Richards. She asked Mrs Helen Brown at the Ashmolean Museum if she could tell us about it.

Mrs Brown told us that it came from Portugal during the reign of Maria I, and it was a 20-reis coin. She said that Maria reigned jointly with Pedro III, 1777-86, then alone 1786-99. For the last years of her life, after she had lost her mind, there was a regent, John. 480 reis became the equivalent of 1 gold escudo.

How did it get to Eynsham? We think an English soldier might have dropped it when he got home from the Peninsula War in Portugal, where the English were fighting Napoleon's forces, 1807-11. There were about 250,000 British troops there, under the command of Arthur Wellesley, who became the Duke of Wellington.

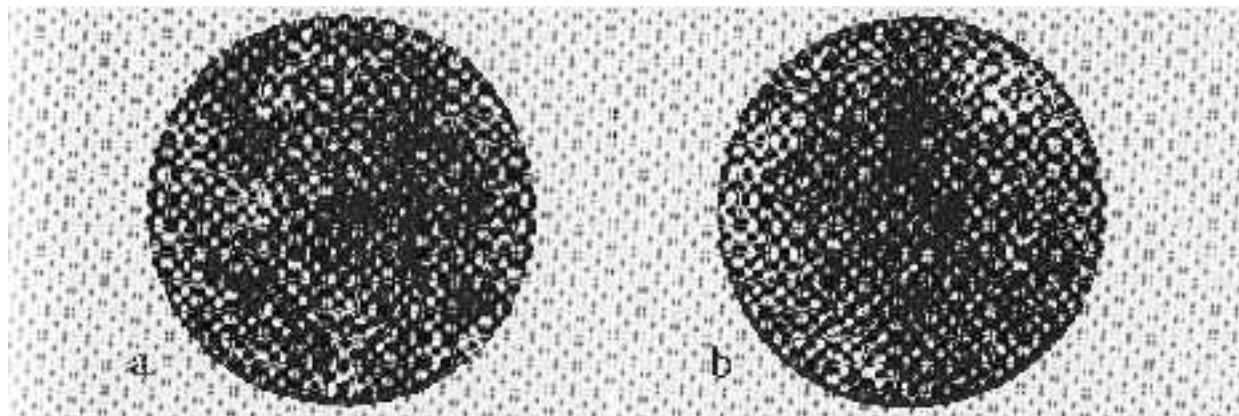


Fig.1

- a) Obverse: [Crowned arms of Portugal] MARIA I DEI GRATIA [Maria I by the grace of God]
- b) Reverse: [in a wreath] 20 [reis] 1795 PORTUGALIAE ET ALGARBIORUM REGINA [Queen of Portugal and the people of the Algarve]

Photographs by Mr Brian Peart.

EYNESHAM MONKS AT THE DISSOLUTION

by Lilian Wright

At a meeting of the History Group last November Dr Anne Laurence took as her subject the fate of the monastic orders in general at the Dissolution. But what happened specifically to the abbot and monks of Eynsham after the surrender of the abbey on 4 December 1538? In 1930 G.Baskerville¹ recorded some details about these men, including the pensions they were awarded; and a lightly edited and annotated version of Baskerville's list follows.

1. Anthony Dunstan (alias Kitchin) S.T.P. Abbot². £133/6/8. Became Bishop of Llandaff in 1545. Died 31 October 1563.
2. Edmund Raynsford (alias Eton) Prior £10/0/0. Ordained Priest in Thame Church 11 March 1524/5. The pension list of 1556 shows that he also had a pension from a Chantry in Hungerford Church, Berks.
3. George (not Gregory as in pension list) Brodehurst (alias Adderbury) Sub-prior. £6/13/4.
4. Thomas Mill (alias Malmesbury) Chanter and Almoner. £5/6/8. Probably identical with the Thomas Mill, stipendiary of Cirencester Parish Church (marked 'former religious' in Bishop Bell's Visitation of 1540) and Vicar of Coaley, Glos. 1561. Died 1569.
5. Thomas Phillips £5/6/8.
6. Thomas Knollis £5/6/8. Stipendiary of Eynsham in 1540 Visitation. Will of Thomas Knollis, Clerk of St Peter le Bailey, Oxford proved 9 Feb. 1534/5. But our monk's name is still on the pension list of 1556.
7. Robert Ford (alias Newland) Chaplain & Cellarer³. Ordained deacon in Buckingham Church by Bishop King, 25 May 1532. Rector of Cassington (an Eynsham living) 1545; Will proved 15 Sept. 1557.
8. John Coxeter £5/6/8.
9. William Buck £5/6/8.
10. John Hedges £5/6/8.

All, excepting the former abbot and George Brodehurst, were still on the pension list in 1556.

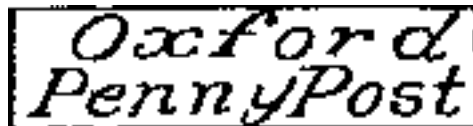
Footnotes and references (see inside front cover for abbreviations)

1. G.Baskerville. *Dispossessed Religious of Oxfordshire (Benedictine Monks, Eynsham)*. Oxfordshire Archaeological Society. No.75. Report for 1930, pp.330-1. Baskerville's primary sources were (a) Letters & Papers of Henry 8 XIII (2) No.989 (Pension List of 21 January, 1538/9); and XIV (1) No.105. (b) Reg. Longland f.17 & f.31. (c) Oxfordshire Wills. (d) P.R.O. Augmentation Office, Misc. Books, Vol.31.
2. Spelt Dunstone, alias Kitchen' by Salter in *Eynsham Cart*. Vol.I, p.xxxi. S.T.P. (sc. *Sanctae Theologiae Professor*) was a degree awarded by Oxford University in medieval times to a doctor of theology. In more recent times the Latin word `professor' has taken on a more exalted meaning!
3. No pension figure given by Baskerville, but probably £5/6/8 in view of Ford's position in the list.

A POSTAL POSTSCRIPT

by Edward Hibbert

In my recent article on Eynsham's postal history, I referred to a letter sent from `Ensham' on 27 August 1838 to Daventry via the Oxford Penny Post'. I have since come across a similar letter from Ensham to Daventry of the same period, dated December 6th, 1838 and also sent via:-



This letter, which is now in my collection, is from Mr G.Stanton and reads, 'I received your order for £200 yesterday and shall feel much obliged if you can make arrangements for the further sum I require by this day week'. £200 was a large sum of money in 1838. The letter is sealed with black sealing wax bearing the clear impression of an elephant and castle.

Reference

1. Edward Hibbert. Eynsham's Postal History. *E.R.* , No.8, 1991, p.13.

BRICKNELL'S BRICKS

by Brian Atkins

One of the many episodes in the turbulent career of the Revd W.S. Bricknell, vicar of Eynsham 1845-88, finds him not in his familiar role as evangelical priest in conflict with his bishop or parishioners, but as an entrepreneurial landowner seeking his worldly fortune¹.

The 19th century witnessed, not least in Oxfordshire, a large demand for building materials in the form of bricks, roof-tiles, drainage-tiles, etc². The raw material for these products is clay, which then needs digging, wetting, moulding, drying and firing in a kiln.

In 1854 Bricknell, discovering that he had the raw material to hand, resolved to exploit it. His immediate problem was to find financial backers to provide the capital to set up the business.

On 25 January 1855, he wrote a long letter to Mr John Davenport, the Oxford Diocesan Registrar, seeking his help³.

[The following extracts include, in square brackets, dots where I have failed to read a word, or an inserted word or phrase which aid clarity. Some extra punctuation is for the same purpose].

"...About two months since, my notice was attracted to some soil in one of my fields & upon further investigation, I discovered in [the] same ground, nine distinct kinds of clay. I forwarded specimens to, and had some articles made at, potteries in various parts of the kingdom, Weston-super-Mare, Worcester, Preston in Lancashire & other places. I also submitted them to ten or a dozen competent judges, builders, kiln [...?], brickmakers, and secured from all the same reports, that the clays were of first-rate quality & that not only for [...?] commons & fire bricks, plain tiles, draining tiles &c; but also chimney pots, flower pots, sewage pipes, yellow and white glazed wares might be made from them. A man from Headington last week stated that there is no brick field to be compared with it on this side of Warwickshire.

The field is bounded on two sides by a brook with a good supply of water & on the third by a good road leading into Eynsham from which it is rather more than a quarter of a mile distant. It contains nine acres and the lower part of it [?] vicinity of the brook, will make, as the clay is dug out, excellent osier beds. The rent I have hitherto got from it [i.e. the field] is but 23s. per acre. Upon enquiry I find that I can be supplied with good coal for kiln [...?] in the fields at from 13s. to 15s. a ton..."

He has "a person in whom he can place the greatest confidence on the spot to overlook the whole business", and is determined to make in the first instance bricks

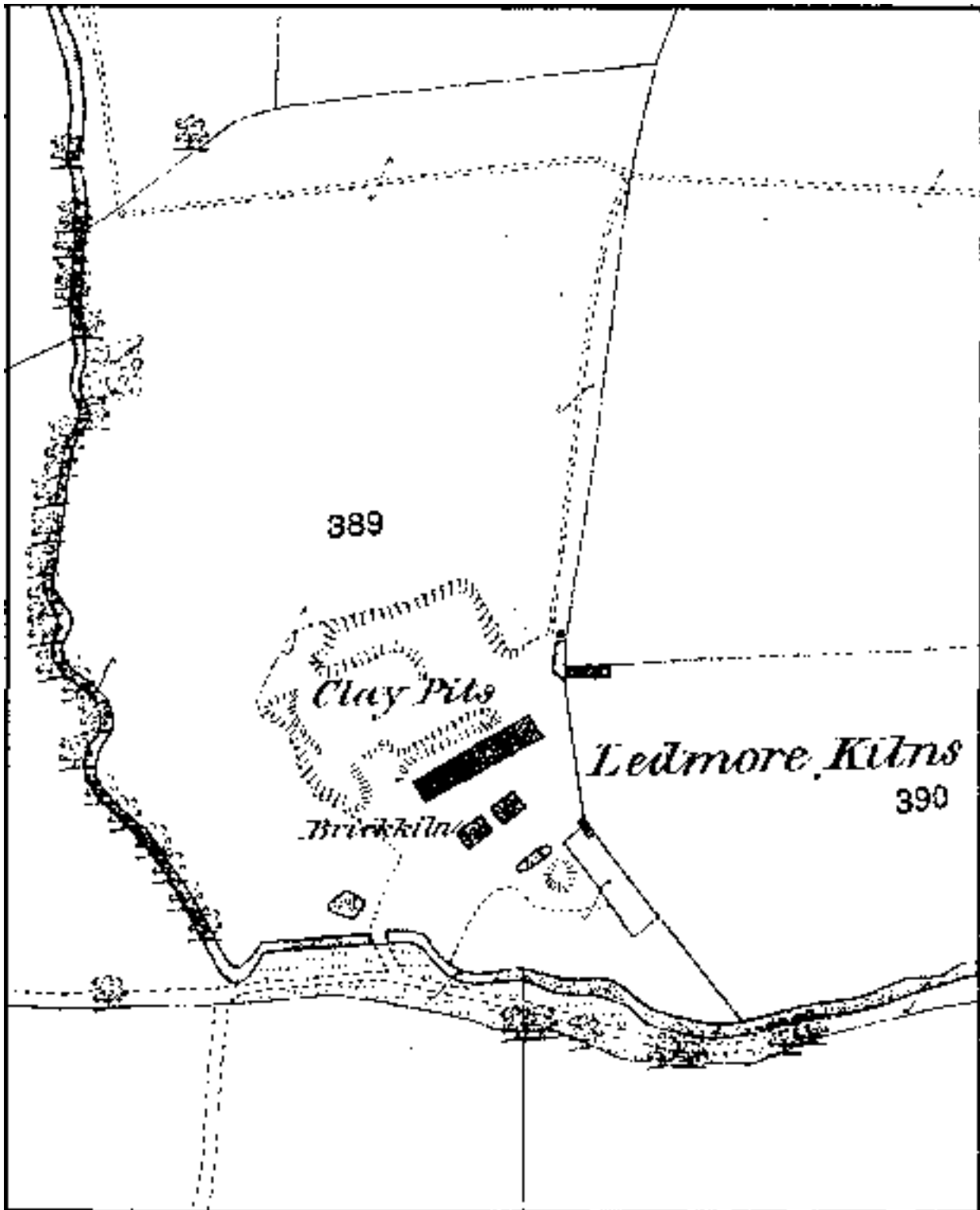


Figure 1. The Ledmore kilns, 1876. The stream is the Chilbrook.
O.S. 1:2500 map, Oxon XXXII.7.
(Modern grid reference: SP 164 419094)

and plain tiles. He continues: "Indeed I have been digging clay for some weeks past". "Plain tiles such as are used in Berkshire for roofing" would be "in great request". He had "found five most substantial customers who would together take 800,000 bricks if made this season, and one of them would like 500,000 more next year". A Mr Johnson, an Oxford builder, "intends to pay me a visit", having stated that "Mr Bricknell is a very lucky man and will make his fortune in 7 years".

His final flourish in this letter includes a pun, but would have strained the credulity of a mid-19th century geologist! "I might go deeper into the matter & tell you that at only 8 feet below the surface we have found unmistakable signs of coal & iron ore", but , apparently anxious not to damage the trade in these commodities along the Oxford Canal "I will certainly, for the present, content myself with the upper strata" !

With astonishing rapidity, Bricknell had financial backing, and was hard at work. It seems that, within 24 hours, Davenport had promised £500; that in the previous month, he had successfully negotiated a bond for £350 with John Edward Neighbour of Wallingford; and another for £500 with a John Fawdry at about the same time³.

His field is easily identified, not least from his own very accurate description, in his January letter to Davenport. It lay immediately north-east of the right-angle bend of the Chilbrook, roughly two-thirds of the way between Eynsham and Twelve-Acre Farm. The site, with its pits, drying shed and kilns, is shown on the first large-scale Ordnance Survey map of the area, published in 1876⁴, where it is labelled as 'Ledmore Kilns' (Fig.1).

Bricknell was moving quickly. On 19 March, less than two months after obtaining Davenport's help, Bricknell is writing again to inform him that the "kilns will be completed this week. They will burn 20,000 bricks and 20 quarters of tiles each time. The drying shed will also be finished in a few days time, 140 ft x 23 ft wide. I have clay enough dry to make 400,000 bricks. The machine is ready at Prestons waiting my orders." He has orders for bricks for four new houses at Banbury, and Pymm, building at Stanton Harcourt is a potential customer³.

On 8 May, again to Davenport, he wrote that he is "fairly started". One kiln has been fired and emptied, and the other is "now smoking". "If the price can be agreed", Mr Symm, building at Exeter College, will take "any quantity", and Mr Nooks wants 500,000 for the "new Museum". Mr Barnet of Glympton wants 9 inch paving squares³.

Whether or not, in the event, Bricknell did supply Symm and Nooks is not known, but certainly Symm was engaged in major building works for Exeter College in the 1850s⁵, and the University Museum was also under construction at that time.

There is no doubt that the project got off the ground - we have the evidence from the 1876 map - but it is by no means clear whether, or for how long, the enterprise prospered.

In the 1861 Eynsham census we find Jeremiah Clarke⁶, aged 53, living in Acre End St describing himself as a brickmaker employing six men, five of whom were probably Thomas Clapton, 45, John Timming, 37, Thomas Waterman (or Wakelin), 18, and William Judd 66 (all in Acre End St.), and John Akers (or Arles), 73, in Queen St. It is likely that these were the men operating the Ledmore Kilns for Bricknell. It may, however, be significant that ten years later the 1871 census records only two brickmakers in the village, Jeremiah Clarke again, now aged 63, and Edw in Judd. Had the business collapsed? If so, the clay pits, the two kilns and the drying shed, with dimensions 140 ft by 23 ft, exactly as Bricknell had described in 1855, were still there when the surveyors prepared the 1876 map.

Today there is no trace of the site except for a different soil colouration, visible after ploughing, where the pits have been back-filled; and an abundance of fragments of brick, tile and pottery (some of which may have been imported when the site was levelled?).

Did the Vicar make the personal fortune that Mr Johnson had predicted in 1855? Probably not. The bundle of papers in the diocesan records which provides much of this story is chiefly concerned with Bricknell's inability or unwillingness to service the loans he had raised. Interest at 5% was not being paid to Neighbour and Fawdry, and in due course writs were issued.

But that is another tale!

References and footnotes (see inside front cover for abbreviations)

1. I am greatly indebted to Lilian Wright, who has transcribed some of the manuscript material relating to Bricknell, for drawing my attention to this particular story.
2. See for example, Bond,J., Gosling,S. & Rhodes,J. *Oxfordshire Brickmakers*. Oxfordshire Museums Service, Publication No.14, 1980. For this and other brick-works in Eynsham Parish, see also *V.C.H.Oxon.*, Vol.12, p.140b.
3. Oxon.Archives. M.S.Oxon.Diocesan papers, Parish Box III, c.1811. Bundle headed "As to Neighbour & Fawdry".
4. O.S. 1:2500 1st Ed., Oxon XXXII.7, 1876.
5. Pers.comm. Mrs L.C.Topliffe, sub-librarian, Exeter College, Oxford (letter of 20/2/1992).
6. Jeremiah Clarke may previously have been a local builder. The brick cottages immediately north of the Star public house in Witney Rd. bear the initials 'JC.' and the date '1850' (*V.C.H.Oxon.*, Vol. 12, p.140, footnote 17).

**Some reviewers' comments on *Eynsham Abbey, 1005-1228*, by
Eric Gordon** (Phillimore, 1990, xxii+186 pages. ISBN 0 85033 747X)

...The book chronicles the rapidly changing fortunes of Eynsham Abbey during the early Middle Ages, describing monastic life and customs under the Benedictine rule. Aimed at a wide audience, it is well-written and beautifully illustrated, combining both scholarship and readability. Gordon displays healthy scepticism of the major documentary source, the Eynsham Cartulary, and guides the reader ably through the primary material, supplying his own translations from records to illustrate his history. Subtitled '*A Small Window into a Large Room*', the book succeeds in its attempt to make the wider concerns and problems of the period accessible to a general readership through the study of one particular foundation.

St Catharine's College [Cambridge] Society Magazine, Sept.1991.

Bishop Gordon's history of Eynsham Abbey from 1005 to 1228 covers the period of its Saxon foundation, its abandonment at the time of the Norman invasion in 1066 and its refoundation at Stowe in Lincolnshire about twenty years later and its return to Eynsham about 1105. The book is a remarkable example of learning lightly worn, with a very readable style and a reasoned interpretation of the tangled history of the early Abbey, its exile and refounding in Eynsham. There are also glimpses of the Abbey over the next 120 years ending with Abbot Adam's exploitation of Abbey lands in the Newland Street area. This was probably financially a failure and in 1228 he was deposed. The book has many illustrations with some effective examples of his wife, Gwynneth Holt's sculpture

John Tolkien. *Roundabout*, no.99, February 1991.

.... First and foremost the author's approach makes the book a thoroughly good 'read', particularly for anyone put off (and who is not?) by the dry Latin texts of the *Eynsham Cartulary* and *Customary*, or anyone unaware of the attractions of Aelfric's *Homilies*. The bishop's zest is infectious, and one shares his pleasure in Aelfric's warning to Bishop Wulfsige to bark as a proper watchdog or else 'off would go Wulfsige, mitre and all, to the eternal flames'. The many vivid translations of medieval chronicles, charters, writs, and customs will in themselves provide most readers with insight into the medieval mind..... The book is a work of love ...

Alan Crossley. *Oxfordshire Local History*, vol.3, no.7, 1991, pp.324-5.

Crossley's review is much more extensive and valuable than this very brief extract might suggest. Do read it! Alan Crossley is, of course, editor of the *V.C.H. Oxon.*, and researched and wrote the Eynsham section in the latest volume. (Ed.)

EYNHAM HISTORY GROUP

Founded 1959

The E.H.G. exists primarily to encourage studies in, and to promote knowledge of the history of the village and parish of Eynsham, Oxfordshire, by means of regular meetings (normally at least ten), with invited speakers, during the winter and spring; and occasional outings during the summer.

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